Film Quarterly

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GODARD'S *HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA*

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN

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AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Aviva Briefel is the author of *The Deceivers: Art Forgery and Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cornell University Press, 2006). She is currently co-editing an anthology of essays on horror cinema after 9/11.

David Forgacs holds the Chair of Italian at University College London (UCL) and until 2009 is Research Professor in Modern Studies at the British School at Rome. His most recent book is, with Stephen Gundle, *Mass Culture and Italian Society from Fascism to the Cold War* (Indiana University Press, 2007).

Bruce Kawin is Professor of English and Film at the University of Colorado at Boulder. His books include *Mindscreen: Bergman, Godard, and First-Person Film* (Dalkey Archive Press edition, 2006), *How Movies Work* (University of California Press edition, 1992), and the last six editions of the late Gerald Mast's *A Short History of the Movies* (Longman). He is currently writing a book on the horror film.

D. A. Miller is the author of *Bringing Out Roland Barthes* (University of California Press, 1992), *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical* (Harvard University Press, 2000), and *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style* (Princeton University Press, 2005). "On the Universality of *Brokeback Mountain*" appeared in the spring 2007 issue of *Film Quarterly*.

Brigitte Rollet is the author of *Coline Serreau* (Manchester University Press, 1998), *Télévision et Homosexualité: 10 ans de fictions françaises* (L'Harmattan, 2007), and, with Carrie Tarr, *Cinema and the Second Sex: Women's Filmmaking in France in the 1980s and 1990s* (Continuum, 2001).

J. M. Tyree is a Truman Capote Fellow in Fiction at Stanford University's Wallace Stegner Fellowship Program in Creative Writing and, with **Ben Walters**, author of a 2007 study of *The Big Lebowski* in the BFI Film Classics series.

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COVER PHOTO Günter Lamprecht as Franz Biberkopf in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1979–80). Courtesy The Criterion Collection.

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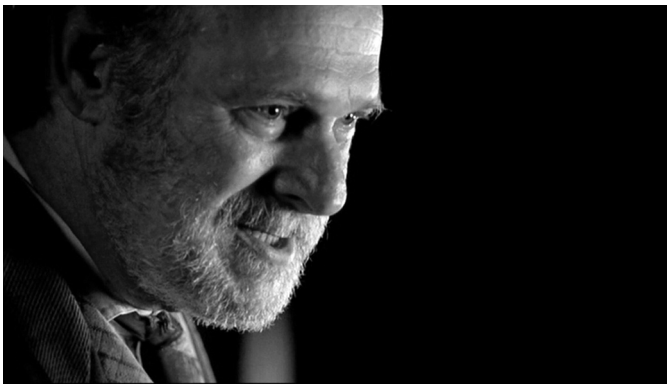
EASY WORDS

In this issue of *Film Quarterly*, four unusually lengthy works now available on DVD, which have a combined running time of forty hours, are reviewed. They range from poetic documentary to crime epic, but each is a work of the utmost distinction. To begin with, James S. Williams considers Jean-Luc Godard's long-gestating video essay, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (264 minutes, completed in 1998 and released last year in France as a boxed set with English subtitles). Also spotlighted are Ken Jacobs's *Star Spangled to Death* (402 minutes) and two dramas made for television: the fourth season (*c.* 800 minutes) of David Simon's engrossing Baltimore thriller, *The Wire*, and Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (940 minutes).

Ostensibly similar in format and urban setting to *The Wire*, in terms of style Fassbinder's fourteen-part film about the toils of ex-con Franz Biberkopf (Günter Lamprecht) is in a category all of its own. It is true that after some hours *Berlin Alexanderplatz* starts to become suspenseful as it belatedly builds to a melodramatic finale, but apart from that it offers hardly any of the creature comforts of storytelling or character development. The intellectual rewards of the film are immense, but the viewer must tackle *Berlin Alexanderplatz* without any soothing: the whole world of this fiction resembles a torture chamber, a dungeon not a populous city, and it is often very hard to watch what goes on there. Fassbinder notably shows the murder of Ida (Barbara Valentin) so many times that it becomes less a flashback than a kind of sensory-overload experiment, a visual shock treatment that no longer has any purpose except its own repetition. In his "Second Time Around" column, D. A. Miller analyzes this exacting aesthetic with "its maddening flicker of impediments," homing in on one shattering minute in the eleventh episode during which Mieze (Barbara Sukowa) is overwhelmed by terror—or something worse than terror, an anguish so extreme it is hard to find it a name. *Berlin Alexanderplatz*'s originality and significance are indexed by the distress and confusion it provokes. At first, as Miller suggests, "the only honest response . . . is to gape and stammer."

⁂

There Will Be Blood, directed by Paul Thomas Anderson, begins with a cacophony (scored by Jonny Greenwood of Radiohead) like a great swarming of insects. Other sounds follow: the impact of a pickaxe, boots ascending a rope ladder, wind and thunder, dynamite exploding, and then, after the unassisted Daniel Plainview (Daniel Day-Lewis) falls down his crudely constructed mineshaft, a constricted and almost voiceless cry of agony that Plainview suppresses sufficiently to whisper a barely audible "there she is" on seeing treasure glinting from the split rock. The mesmerizing opening sequence's twenty minutes have elapsed before the first fully formed words are spoken: "Ladies and gentleman." It is Plainview nine years later, making a formal pitch for business to a group of bickering townspeople. Although he tells another gathering that "I am better at digging holes in the ground than making speeches," it is quickly apparent that like the pulleys and levers he uses, language is an effective tool for profit and coercion.



George Hearst in *Deadwood*. © 2006 Home Box Office. DVD: Paramount Home Entertainment (U.K.)

All Plainview's prospecting talk is exploitation. I was reminded of the character of George Hearst (Gerald McRaney) in the TV Western, *Deadwood*. "My proper traffic is with the earth," he insists in the "True Colors" episode of season 3, "only goddam conversation I care to have: her telling me where to dig into her." Hearst's figure of speech is a sham, for no communication is actually involved, only a manifestation of force and malice. Any idea of community is additionally excluded or, as when Plainview declares that "children are the future that we strive for," an expedient lie. He may aver, as Hearst does too, that he only yearns for solitary labor, for exile, but it is a subjugating hatred that truly drives him. "I have a competition in me," he admits in a rare moment of frankness, "I want no one else to succeed."

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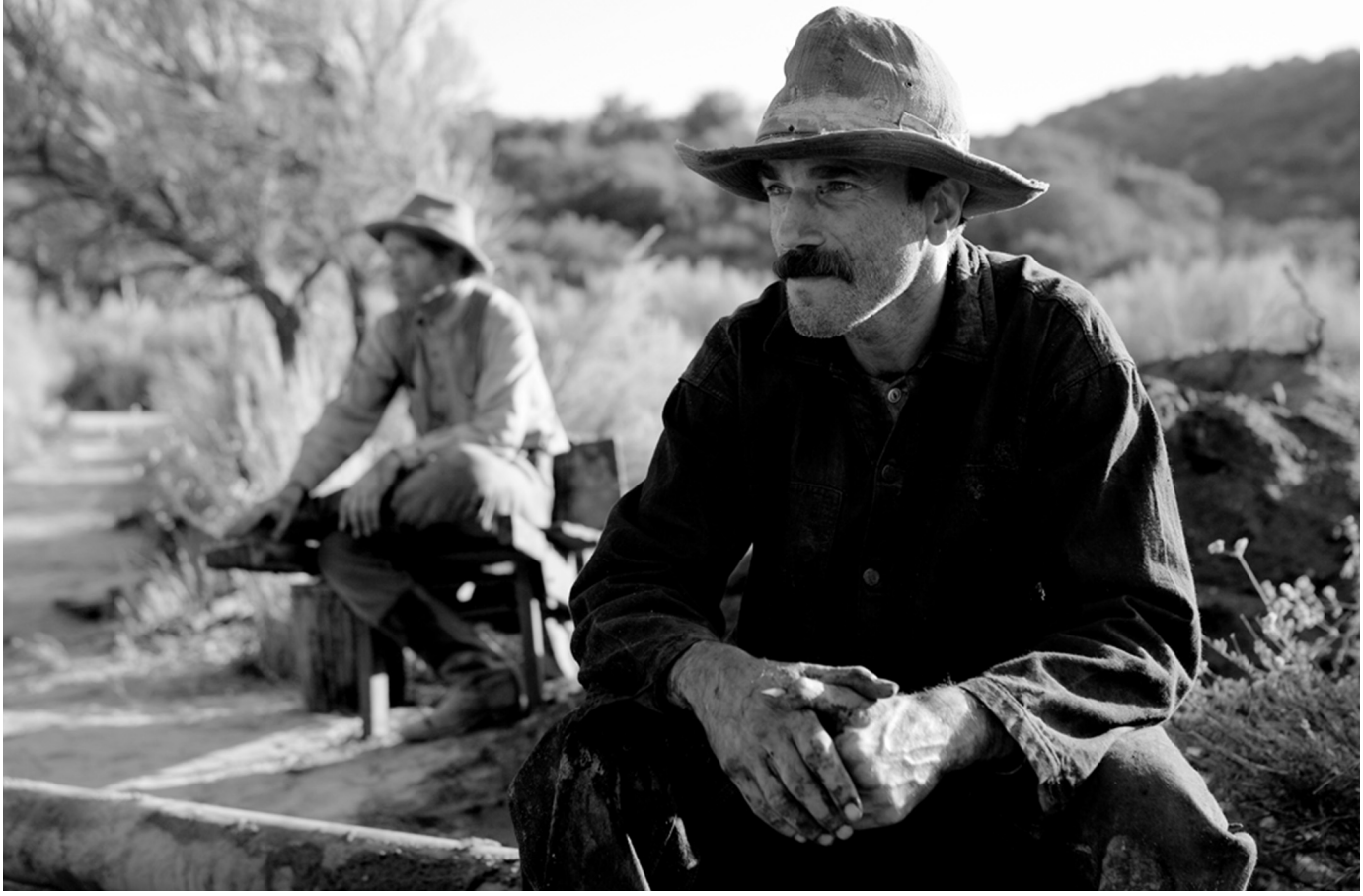

Daniel Plainview in *There Will Be Blood*. Photo: François Duhamel. © 2007 Paramount Vantage

⁂

Joel and Ethan Coen's screen adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* further elaborates on the theme of male ruthlessness. It is personified here by the hit man, Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem), who is on the trail of Llewellyn Moss (Josh Brolin) and a large briefcase full of heroin money. Pedantic like Plainview, Chigurh is stiff and gormless but a fanatic of self-discipline. Though he cannot suffocate his emotions completely, he is always able to hold his temper in order to make himself clear. Hate must impel him too, but it is never confessed.

The discipline is military. It emerges only in passing, but the salient background is, as Joan Mellen points out, that Moss, Carson Wells (Woody Harrelson), and surely Chigurh too, are veterans of the Vietnam War. Likeable as Moss may seem, he is a version of his pursuer: "Both men have been fashioned out of the crucible of imperial war," Mellen writes, "and both have absorbed the lessons necessary for survival." (Moss's training is good enough that he is even able to fell Chigurh briefly.) Mellen relates *No Country for Old Men* to Paul Haggis's *In the Valley of Elah*, which concerns atrocities perpetrated by serving soldiers, and Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven*, newly re-released on DVD, finding in them a "monstrous distortion of the human" produced by a long history of conquest and oppression.

"The strong call 'consolidating' bending the weak to their will," Al Swearengen (Ian McShane) tells Hearst. "I broke you and I beat you," Plainview says to the meddlesome boy preacher Eli Sunday (Paul Dano). His brutality implies a world view, which is stated by the ghoulish judge in McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*: "Moral law is an invention of mankind for the disenfranchisement of the powerful in favor of the weak." The impersonal, matter-of-fact assertiveness of that remark is typical. It is to their advantage that these men claim that some natural law prevails behind their actions. In a scene from *The Wire* that J. M. Tyree singles out, the icy young drug boss Marlo (Jamie Hector) steals from a store in order to provoke the security guard and deliver a softly spoken taunt: "You want it to be one way . . . but it's the other way" (he has the guard killed later). The rattled owner of a gas station tries to shrug off Chigurh's increasingly menacing conversation and odd turns of phrase, only to get the reply: "I don't have some 'way to put it.' That's the way it is." This is what Plainview calls "old-fashioned plain speaking." The words come easily to Chigurh and Marlo and the others, serial killers who try to talk like philosophers. What may be most disturbing about their viciousness is its credible pretense of lucid rationality.

Rob White

THE END

I'm Not There (Todd Haynes, 2007) is an entrancing movie. Cate Blanchett is a fine actor. As one of the six Dylans—"Jude Quinn," the star at his shimmering, recalcitrant zenith—Blanchett hazards a daring performance, peaking in the Fellini-dreaming encounter with David Cross's Allen Ginsberg.

Nonetheless, the critical unanimity about Blanchett's achievement is puzzling. She struggles. She veers closer to impersonation than invention, sometimes labored, and her simulacral voice warps and frays half-down the tenor range. She holds the screen largely because Haynes keeps her camera-center. By comparison, Charlotte Gainsbourg, playing Suze Rotolo/Sarah Dylan/Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands, is riveting and absolute even as she stays within herself at the side of the screen, leaving her scene partner Heath Ledger plenty of space to extend his charms.

What are the stakes of this insistently repeated misjudgment? Well, she ain't bad. And the caricatural cineaste of the *New Yorker* demographic—white middlebrow male, lived through the *nouvelle vague*—goes Pavlovian over women from the former British Empire who do classy-sexy: Blanchett, Thompson, Scott-Davies, Mirren, Swinton, Winslet, and when Gwyneth puts on the accent . . . you get the picture.

Perhaps it's the relief at being able to displace the hots for the historical Bobby onto a woman's body (much as Carrie-Anne Moss, caulked, coiffed, and costumed to resemble her *Matrix* [Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999] co-star, served as a convenient diversion for boys who felt bad about feeling good about Keanu).

But one also catches a whiff of self-congratulation to which the stunt-casting is insightfully attuned: we all feel so cool about being down with the gender play, so open-minded and progressive (indeed, there is another column to be written about the extent to which, in casting Dylan as a woman, a young black male, and a bunch of white guys *who are still fundamentally identical*, Haynes has made a film of this year's Democratic presidential primaries). This sensibility is finally annoying, both because it reminds us that the anxiety endures after all, but also because there are few spectacles as unwholesome as liberals flattering themselves. This critical reception doesn't make *I'm Not There* a lesser film, just a less-pleasant social fact.

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Indeed, it may make it a better film, for the nuance with which it courts and confounds its target audience. "Self-congratulatory progressives" should give the game away. Of course the film is instantly beloved by the cultural guard, which is practically defined by taking Dylan for an epochal figure. But at the same time, the possibility that Bobby could be reduced to biopic must be disavowed: "This is not a Bob Dylan movie" was a *New York Times* title, sentiment widespread.

But it is. In its insistence on cracking one character into the six names of Woody, Arthur, Jack, Robbie, Jude, and Billy the Kid, *I'm Not There* strikes at the heart of Dylan. He knew a secret and was unequaled in its martial application: as soon as you name yourself—the second you agree to be any one thing—you're a butterfly on a board. Even if you've selected the stick-pin yourself, and gotten a million bucks for choosing. So Dylan wouldn't say his own name, even if it meant being an asshole; *Don't Look Back* (D. A. Pennebaker, 1967) is about this and nothing else, which distinguishes it from the fascinating but less-charged *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan* (Martin Scorsese, 2005).

I'm Not There is an artistic capture of Dylan's escape artistry; this is an ambiguous achievement. The man gets his due, and the casting of Blanchett (and Marcus Carl Franklin) serves at satisfying confirmation that we are all Dylan. At the same time, Dylan's meaning must remain up for grabs, possibility-filled; to strike at his mystery, even with a nuanced *coup*, risks fixing him in place, making him finite. This is intolerably threatening to a pathologically over-identified generation, whose recent delusion of Dylan's recovered genius is largely a bedtime story it would like to believe about itself.

While the movie participates in flattering its audience, it has more incisive moments. Its Dylan comes to an end right around the time that the demographic leviathan known as Boomer was trading its political birthright for the pottage of cultural satisfactions. Whereupon the film exits the actual doings of history, and slips into its mythic world-out-of-time. This fantasy is rather the film's moment of truth—not just about the end of Dylan's power, but about a generation's politics. *We're Not There*: history goes on, but without us, who abandoned the possibilities of change. It's harder to imagine the end of Dylan than his endless renewal, but *I'm Not There* manages to do both by finding a trapdoor in history itself.

Envisioning a more comprehensive culmination still, *I Am Legend* (Francis Lawrence, 2007) is the third pass at the

Richard Matheson book; it's almost as good as the second, *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagal, 1971). In that version, lead character Robert Neville was played by Charlton Heston.

This one concludes quite differently, and both diverge from the book, but each has its satisfactions and terrors. Since we're puzzling over the blind spots of critical response: it has gone without comment that, in pitting Last Man Alive Will Smith against an army of albino humanoids, the long first act is basically *Kill Whitey*. One wonders what Charlton Heston would make of that.

Still, there's a clear continuity between the two actors. A born politico just marking time and money in Hollywood, Smith is a Heston for Democrats.

Another thing the two Nevilles share is a taste for post-Impressionists. *The Omega Man* has a background Van Gogh; Smith's Washington Park townhouse adds another, and a Rousseau—presumably "salvaged" from the MoMA after the apocalyptic viral freakout.

Art rescued from civilization's collapse—it's an odd little clump of meaning. Julia Kristeva called such a thing an "ideologeme": the smallest kernel capable of bearing ideological conflict. If this particular ideologeme has a history, it has also seen a recent blossoming. Beyond *I Am Legend*, it also shows up in *V for Vendetta* (James McTeigue, 2005) and *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuaron, 2006), to name a couple. An implausible recurrence for such a minor gesture, it's starting to feel like the name "Nina" concealed in all those Al Hirschfeld cartoons. What do those squirreled-away artworks mean?

Perhaps it's just whistling in the dark of Philistine armies, a kind of counter to the comedy stylings of Donald Rumsfeld: "The images you are seeing on television you are seeing over, and over, and over, and it's the same picture of some person walking out of some building with a vase, and you see it 20 times, and you think, 'My goodness, were there that many vases? Is it possible that there were that many vases in the whole country?'"

Looted art in *The Omega Man* (probably Vincent Van Gogh, *Green Field with Cypress*, Saint-Rémy). © 1971, renewed 1999 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.

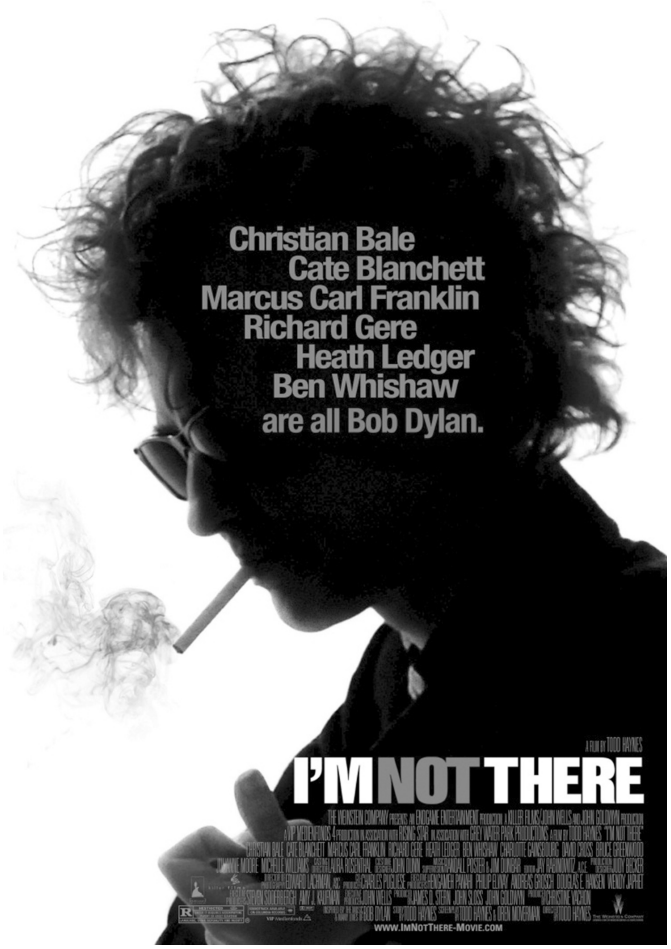

Photo: The Weinstein Company Entertainment Inc.

But the context of these films somehow makes the oddity more vexing than a simple index of the current war, highlighting as it does not just preservation or looting, but a sort of aesthetic delectation. Why do these artworks keep floating unexplained in the background of futuristic scenarios where the system has broken down?

Another way to phrase the question might be, what's culture's fate when exchange value has exited the stage? Would we still want *The Starry Night* or van Eyck's Arnolfini portrait if there was no market or museum to guarantee its wonder?

It's the kind of revolutionary proposition generation Boomer abandoned: the question of revolution is the question of imagining a world where pleasures are uncoupled from market value. In this small ideologeme, we might suggest that *I Am Legend* and its cohort are trying to imagine this very situation. In so doing, they leap farther and in the opposite direction than *I'm Not There*'s flight into a mythic past. "It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism" (often credited to Fredric Jameson, though he says otherwise). These films seem willing to imagine the latter, but find it impossible without the former. There's no way out but apocalypse.

JOSHUA CLOVER is the author of *The Matrix* (BFI Modern Classics, 2004).

ON THE SET

The stereotype of the movie director that has endured from the silent era is that of the beret-wearing, chain-smoking man shouting to cast through a megaphone. Yet most directors will admit that very little of their job involves altering an actor's performance. If the right actor has been cast in the role, this is rarely necessary. Directing does, however, involve firm and clear decision-making throughout the making of a film, from prep through post-production. But it is during shooting when these decisions must be made most quickly, under the most pressure, and while interacting with the widest variety of people.

An average production day might go something like this. The "sides," or the script pages for the day, are presented to the director upon arrival to set. He or she goes over the pages, tracks down the actors in the hair-and-makeup trailer, and makes any final dialogue adjustments. Then there is the discussion of the day's work with the assistant director and the director of photography, after which the actors are called in to block the action. This is where the bulk of the important decision-making is made, establishing a game plan for the scene. Some directors have already worked out the shots, others design them as they feel out the space with the actors. Then it is time to place the camera and decide if, when, and how it moves (by dolly, crane, jib, or Steadicam). These decisions must be made relatively quickly and in full view of the entire crew.

At this point, the first team (the actors) steps off while the director of photography oversees the lighting of the set with the second team (the actors' stand-ins). Some directors also step off until this process is over, using the time to rehearse with the actors. When the first shot is ready the actors are brought back in. The director dons headphones with which to hear the dialogue, one channel tuned to the boom microphone and the other to a radio microphone. (I generally listen only to the boom, keeping one ear open to hear the crew as well.) When everything is ready, the director takes the best position to watch the action.

Ever since Jerry Lewis invented the video assist to help him direct while also acting, there has been a debate as to whether the director should stand by the camera or by the monitor. In practice, the monitor (or monitors if there are multiple cameras) is set up away from the action, under a tent with chairs where the producers tend to camp out, and is commonly referred to as "video village." Many insist that the director's place is beside the camera, watching the performance directly instead of filtered through a lens. While I agree that paying attention to the actors is paramount, I find it easier to judge a performance framed the way the camera is capturing it, since that angle is the only one that matters in the end. However I also agree that it is alienating to sit by a distant monitor, encouraging a tendency not to address the actors between takes. So I adopt a middle-ground approach, keeping the monitor close to the camera. When the camera is moving, I use a wireless "clamshell" monitor so I can check the frame while still keeping an eye on the actors themselves. When using Steadicam I often run alongside the camera watching the same monitor as the operator.

Another useful tool is the on-set hard drive. While VHS decks once recorded the video feed for playback purposes, the tapes were difficult to search and thus rarely used. Now, with hard drives, every take that has been filmed can be called up at a moment's notice. So if I am filming on day 41 of shooting the other half of a telephone conversation I filmed on day 2, I can immediately call up the footage to see the frame size, eyeline, and performance. This is invaluable, as the script supervisor's continuity notes can never capture all the details of an image. I have also used the hard drive to watch footage of a plate that will later be inserted in order to tell the actor what is occurring behind him on a greenscreen in real time.

The "video village": two camera monitors and their clamshell monitors. Photo: Sergei Baikov

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Greg Marcks and cinematographer Lorenzo Senatore looking at the monitor of the Steadicam (in Red Square, Moscow). Photo: Sergei Baikov

Shooting a scene requires "coverage," or the series of shots necessary to cut together the action of the scene. A standard dialogue scene generally consists of a master shot followed by single shots of various sizes on each actor. I tend to do at least basic coverage of a scene even if I intend to let it play out in a "oner" (a single master shot) because I like to have the option of correcting something in editing if necessary. Eventually the director decides when the scene is "covered" and moves on to the next scene. How many scenes per day one shoots is a function of budget, expressed in the number of script pages scheduled per day. A smaller-budget film with only a twenty-day shooting schedule may need to film up to nine pages a day, leaving little time for coverage, whereas a longer schedule affords the ability to obtain more shots and (hopefully) a higher-quality product.

After wrap the director calls the editor to see how the footage is cutting together. On this film I was shooting in Europe and my editor, working in L.A., would upload scenes to a secure server for me to watch. In this manner I also watched auditions for roles that had not yet been cast. Given the ten-hour time difference, this meant I was making casting decisions at 3 A.M. after shooting all day. Then, a few hours later, I would begin the process all over again.

Directing ultimately boils down to millions of tiny decisions that cumulatively result in a final film that is either satisfying or tiresome. The decisions themselves are critical, but so is being able to make them in the state of exhaustion in which most directors constantly find themselves. It is a test of mental but also physical endurance: doing the job well means making effective creative decisions, not only in a hectic environment, but also deprived of sleep and even morale. Directing a film can mean being on one's feet for more than eighteen hours a day through the entire duration of the production. Directors who have worn pedometers on set have been surprised to find they have paced dozens of miles during a day's work. This exertion takes a serious physical toll: Peter Jackson lost seventy pounds during the grueling twenty-one-hour-per-day schedule of *King Kong* (2005). Yet most directors would agree that such personal discomforts are far outweighed by the rewards of the job. Pre- and post-production have their share of satisfactions, but there is nothing quite like experiencing the controlled form of chaos that is production, which may be what Warren Beatty meant when he said that "to direct you have to be in control yet out of control."

GREG MARCKS is a director and screenwriter based in Los Angeles.

HISTOIRE(S) DU CINÉMA

JAMES S. WILLIAMS APPLAUDS JEAN-LUC GODARD'S (HI)STORIES

Originally made as a video for Canal+, La Sept, and Gaumont, this 264-minute work began life as an experimental series of improvised talks and lectures Godard gave at the Conservatoire d'Art Cinématographique in Montreal in the late 1970s (subsequently transcribed and published in 1980 as *Introduction à une véritable histoire du cinéma*). The opening two long episodes were eventually broadcast on British and European television in 1989, and subsequent parts were screened at film festivals and museums as and when they became available. It was not until 1998 that the work saw the light of day as a complete (and re-edited) whole, released in France by Gaumont as a four-part VHS boxed set to great acclaim. This was complemented by a set of four hybrid art books by Gallimard derived from the series and a 1999 remixed CD version of the soundtrack from ECM Records that includes transcriptions in French, German, and English.

It is only now, after endless delays and complications over copyright issues, that the DVD of *Histoire(s)* is finally available in its entirety to an English-speaking audience. However, it must be noted that the optional subtitles, although excellently rendered, are far from being complete and indeed are at times extremely selective. Clearly it would have been impossible to translate every word since this polyphonic multimedia work incorporates many different languages and the already dense screen is regularly taken up by intertitles and captions. Such a move would also go against the spirit of *Histoire(s)*, which defies easy translation and summarizing and insists always on the mystery of cinema, or, to quote Godard citing Robert Bresson, a "margin of indeterminacy." The compromise reached—the not-always-consistent subtitling of Godard's voiceover as well as of texts recited by actors such as Alain Cuny, Juliette Binoche, and Julie Delpy that form the majority of the work's non-archival footage—is thus understandable.

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Histoire(s) the DVD remains essentially unchanged from the 1998 video version, which many had expected by this stage to be re-edited, perhaps even digitally, by Godard, particularly in the light of his recent compilation of edited "highlights" transferred to 35mm, *Moments choisis des Histoire(s) du cinéma* (2004). Each disc is uncoded (Region 0) in the PAL standard and the transfers are accurate in the 1.33:1 aspect ratio. So exceptional is the quality of reproduction, in particular of the stereo soundtrack, that one feels this is *Histoire(s)* as it was always meant to be. Yet the DVD is also very different from the CD-ROM lovingly put together recently by Japanese scholars which constitutes, for those lucky enough to read Japanese and afford it, a vital resource by providing the sources and references for much of Godard's found material. In fact, the DVD resolutely refuses to conform to the expectations of DVD culture. There are no tailor-made special features, no interviews with the director or actors, no supplementary catalogue or essay—nothing, in fact, that could make it "special" in standard commercial terms. All that is provided "extra" are short extracts of two press conferences Godard gave at Cannes in 1988 and 1997 presenting *Histoire(s)* and the fine fifty-minute video short made in collaboration with Anne-Marie Miéville, *2x50 Years of French Cinema* (1995). Strangely, all three pieces lack subtitles, in the case of the latter explicably so since it was produced by the BFI and has already been broadcast with them on British television. The DVD is not even divided into commodified, user-friendly "chapters," a clear artistic decision by Godard not simply to avoid confusion with the nomenclature of *Histoire(s)* itself which is divided into eight chapters (IA, IB, 2A, etc.), but above all to oblige us to experience the work as an organic whole without editorial guidance. In short, the artisanal and authorial aspect of the presentation, further enhanced by the minimalist style of the packaging recalling the *art brut* installations of Godard's 2006 exhibition, *Voyage(s) en Utopie*, at the Pompidou Centre in Paris, serves to underline and guard intact the artistic status of *Histoire(s)* as a

Elements of montage: superimpositions and an empty black screen. © 1988/1998 Gaumont

video rather than DVD. This is an uncompromising statement of faith by Godard in (analogical) art as opposed to preprogrammed (digital) culture, as well as in the intelligence of his audience.

A PROJECT OF REMEMBERING

It is immediately clear that *Histoire(s)*, like much of Godard's work, is really an essay of film criticism and thus in perfect continuity with his early career as a film critic. Yet nothing like it has been attempted before in film and nothing looks like it, apart, that is, from Godard's own remarkable, idiosnycratic video essays inspired by it such as *Dans le noir du temps* (2002) and *De l'origine du XXI siècle* (2000), as well as films like *Notre Musique* (2004), a meditation on war set in Sarajevo whose opening section ("Hell") could almost be an out-take of chapter 3A which begins with a disturbing concatenation of images of human horror and grotesque barbarism, over which Godard reads Victor Hugo's speech of 1876 on an earlier Balkan war. Never has the case been made so powerfully for the centrality of cinema to our lives, and the phenomenal scope and influence of cinema as a medium that has touched—and been touched by—every other form of art and representation. By placing cinema in this expanded context Godard is not only trying to establish new links across different art forms but also, in the very process, to formalize the fundamental nature of cinema and what it "alone" can

achieve. It does not matter that all the extracts visual and aural cannot be identified—and for the spectator coming fresh to the work that ambition is soon rendered unrealistic and even undesirable. (An identification of most of the cited films and authors was, in fact, realized by the film historian Bernard Eisenschitz for Gaumont with Godard's assistance, resulting in the list available in the published art books. There is also now a fairly complete table of references by Céline Scemama published by L'Harmattan in 2006.) What counts above all is that an intersubjective critical space is created that actively encourages the processes of memory, and forces us also to consider the import and value of *our* own filmic memories.

The first three chapters of *Histoire(s)*—"All the (Hi)stories," "A Single (Hi)story," "The Cinema Alone")—present the core themes, which are actually quite standard film historical fare: the purity of origins, the infinite promise of invention, the betrayal of cinema's popular mission and scientific vocation by Hollywood's greed for narrative and spectacle, the death of the silents at the hands of the talkies, the slowly successive deaths of national cinemas, and the takeover by corporate television. The episodes that follow are essentially case studies: Hollywood beauty and the cosmetics industry, post-war Italian cinema, the *nouvelle vague*, Alfred Hitchcock ("the greatest creator of forms in the twentieth century"), and finally Godard himself, who presents himself hyperbolically as a dissident filmmaker engaged in combat with a morally bankrupt nation (France). Organized around big names and big events, *Histoire(s)* remains largely Eurocentric—France (the mother of invention), Italy, Germany, Russia—and reproduces familiar topics and names, places, moments, and movements while pursuing its anti-Hollywood polemic. Godard willingly agrees with the late Serge Daney, with whom he films himself in conversation in Chapter 2A, that only a member of the *nouvelle vague* like himself could have produced such a work as *Histoire(s)* since he grew up during the war and thus observed (although without knowing it) the story of cinema from its virtual end. The war, in fact, and specifically the Holocaust, represents point zero of *Histoire(s)*, for according to Godard cinema committed a two-fold crime: first it failed to record the Nazi death camps, and then it failed to understand that it had effectively already shown them in films like *Grand Illusion* (1937), *The Rules of the Game* (1939), and *The Great Dictator* (1940).

Never has the case been made so powerfully for the centrality of cinema to our lives, and the phenomenal scope and influence of cinema as a medium that has touched—and been touched by—every other form of art and representation.

It would be relatively easy to critique and debunk Godard's purely rhetorical claims to know and show "all the histories" of cinema, including even those that were lost, or destroyed, or never made. In the case of contemporary filmmakers, only Alain Resnais, Philippe Garrel, Rob Tregenza, and a few others feature in *Histoire(s)*; commercial American filmmakers like Stanley Kubrick are virtually ignored. Yet the work is not conceived as a history of the greatest filmmakers, still less a chronological account of cinema's evolving forms and genres, but rather an exploration of the legend and ideal of cinema and how it came unstuck at the hands of the Real which exacted a terrible revenge for its fatal swerve to spectacle and the sex-and-violence formula. Godard dissects brilliantly the ideological underpinnings of the cinema industry as a dream factory and the relations between cinema and national identity. Indeed, *Histoire(s)* is at its most trenchant when exploring the tensions and discrepancies between cinema as a tool of fiction (it was a phenomenon of the nineteenth century "resolved" in the twentieth century, as Godard neatly puts it) and the demands of rampant capitalism and military power.

The history of cinema is for Godard "a story of the night" without words and thus remains forever virtual. It could not be otherwise since, as Godard remarks at one point with pseudo-scientific authority, we are surrounded by nebulous phantom matter which constitutes the other half of what is actually visible. Such acute self-awareness becomes the very condition of intellectual integrity: all one can do now is to "simulate" a recovery of lost times and beliefs and, yes, invent (within reason). By cutting the mnemonic material into narrative shape, *Histoire(s)* expressly allows fiction to have its say (Godard, as we know, has always refused to separate Lumière and Méliès). His fundamentalist cinematic zeal, together with his increasing sense of professional guilt, inspires him to ever-more poetic speculations, such as his imaginary tale of the discovery of the mathematical principle of projection in 2A, and his elegant hypothesis at the end of 3A that the greatness of Italian neo-realist films lies in the fact that the images are shot through with the language and spirit of Dante, Virgil, and Leopardi. Godard's basic method of tracking down visual and aural echoes and associations, the signs and shards of memory, harks back directly to his Montreal lectures when he projected one of his own films in conjunction with another and used the resulting juxtaposition as the basis for his reflections. Here, however, the process has been taken to

"THE IMAGE WILL COME AT THE TIME OF THE RESURRECTION"

© 1988/1998 Gaumont

unparalleled lengths both in form and content, making *Histoire(s)* an extreme, dizzying, and often overwhelming experience. The diverse material encompasses film extracts, film soundtracks, television images, newsreels, cartoons, textual citations, painting, sculpture, drawing, engraving, sketches, photography, fragments of recorded music, speech, song, and radio broadcasts. Godard cuts as it were "live" into the electronic flesh of our collective imaginary and produces within the space of a frame often unprecedented new connections and surprises, not only in the juxtapositions and ruptures he engineers but also in the way images and sounds are manipulated, distorted and reversed: for example, the crude blue marks that stalk the clothes of the now-black-and-white dancers in *An American in Paris* (1951). It makes the only other work at all comparable to *Histoire(s)*, Scorsese's four-hour *Personal Journey Through American Movies* (1995), seem ironically sober and sedate.

CINEMA REBORN

If montage has always been critical to Godard's work it now defines completely his artistic practice, presented here, in another phrase borrowed from Bresson and much cited, as bringing together for the first time elements not predisposed to being linked. Indeed, for Godard the filmic image *is* montage because it was cinema's unique invention. Godard thus creates a kind of image machine generating metaphors that in turn carry the prospect of bringing the vibrations of History back to life. Apart from odd techniques provided by online video such as spotting, inserting, compositing, and flashing, the effects obtained in *Histoire(s)* are largely derived from early cinema: juxtaposition, dissolves, cross-cutting, acceleration, iris shots, slow motion, fading, and above all superimposition which, in its slow and gentle mode whereby the original filmic image is retained in composite frames, instantiates an idea of Otherness, or rather what might be called seeing through the Other. Hence, the value of montage is at once critical, historical, and ethical. Godard is at the height of his inventive powers here, and there are some virtuoso set pieces of editing across form, including his reworking of his own films, as when he superimposes his own face over the final moments of *Contempt* (1963) in IB; the extended play on birds from Hitchcock to Pier Paolo Pasolini as variously an idea, concept, word, image, metaphor, and symbol in 3A; the probing historical montage around trains during World War II (again in 3A) that tease out new lines of connection between Kandinsky, newsreel images of French collaboration, *Les Visiteurs du soir* (1942), and the Jewish writer Irène Némirovsky (to name just a few of the elements brought into play); and the quite mesmerizing sequence in 1B when Godard plays with the suspense of the final gory moments of the Technicolor shoot-out on the cliff between Jennifer Jones and Gregory Peck in *Duel in the Sun* (1946), introducing ironic intertitles such as "oh temps!" (to be understood phonetically as "au temps," part of a recurring phrase attributed to St. Paul which Godard types word by word into the sequence: "the image will come at the time of the resurrection"). In this breathtaking deconstruction of classical narrative cinema that staggers and decomposes the sequence, redubbing it with music from *Psycho* (1960) and Leonard Cohen to illustrate the grotesqueness of the narrative spectacle of sex and death (and, by extension, the violation of European cinema by Hollywood). Godard is reconfiguring sound and image to generate new ideas and sensations. Not all the collages and "fraternities of metaphors" in *Histoire(s)* are as persuasive, however, notably the provocative juxtaposition in 4B of the words "Israel" and "Ismael" with a term Godard claims was in circulation at Auschwitz, "*musulman*."

Two particular styles of montage stand out in *Histoire(s)*. First, there are the dense, rhetorically motivated formations, one of the most audacious and discussed of which occurs in 1A immediately after Godard has championed George Stevens's color footage of the camps as part of the "martyrdom and resurrection of the documentary." It involves the superimposition within a single frame of shots of the concentration camps, a stop-started sequence from Stevens's *A Place in the Sun* (1951), and a *noli me tangere* representation by Giotto, tilted ninety degrees so it looks as if Mary Magdalene is descending from the clouds like an angel, her outstretched hands encircling Elizabeth Taylor and drawing her up toward the heavens. A prohibition against touching (the risen Christ is just visible bottom-right of screen) has been stunningly reversed by Godard in a new and unheralded form of touching across form, such that all the different elements, banal and divine, are stretched to their limits and inverted. At times like this, a wake for the dead (the recorded trace of twentieth-century history as a graveyard) is transformed into rapture, rising above the constitutive melancholy of *Histoire(s)* and thus offering the temporary illusion that the fateful and ignominious story of cinema's inexorable decline might actually be reversed and sublimated. This is cinema reborn as transcendent art which, as Godard often likes to declare, citing Malraux, is "what is reborn in what has been burnt." Such self-consciously sublime metaphorical events, which require careful unpacking and interpretation, are offset, however, by non-discursive moments of association, confluence, contiguity, and conjunction that instead trace the interrelations of human form at the level of shape, figure, contour, and silhouette. These more basic and spontaneous associa-

An unheralded combination: Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait: Wide-Eyed* (1630, Rijksmusem, Amsterdam); *A Place in the Sun* (George Stevens, 1951/ Paramount Pictures); Stevens's concentration-camp footage; Giotto, "Easter Morning" (1604–06, Capella degli Scrovegni, Padua). © 1988/1998

tions—at once material, proximate, and local—present a more inclusive and immediate experience of seeing and feeling, and it is these associations that one notices more now in the DVD version where the quality of resolution and color is that much greater.

Taken together, these two competing aesthetic drives provide for a fascinating encounter between the intuitive and the counterintuitive that generates much of the internal drama and rhythm of *Histoire(s)*. No one else has demonstrated so powerfully and so imaginatively that the cinema can serve as a means of "thinking through one's hands" (the phrase is from Denis de Rougemont), through the creation of what Godard describes with winning simplicity, "forms that think." There are dangers, of course, with this relentless process of creative cogitation, for whatever the precise mode of operation images are continually wrested from their original plastic and dramatic context and begin to look like a series of epiphanies signifying nothing other than the essential mystery of cinematic creation. Yet at such lyrical moments the videographic process achieves what music alone now represents for Godard, or at least music the way Godard uses it—short, repeated bursts and fragments of Hindemith, Mozart, Kancheli, or Keith Jarrett. Always moving forward in linear time, music is the past recasting itself poetically into the future with revelatory promise. As such, it manages to escape the fatal nexus of money, cinema, and history-for-sale that Godard regards as a particularly pernicious aspect of our current condition, and which is summed up for him in just one name: Spielberg.

A MODEL OF RESISTANCE?

The full significance and implications of *Histoire(s)* are still a long way from being comprehensively explored and understood. The initial reception of the work has focused inevitably on questions of history and film historiography, in particular regarding the representation of the Holocaust and

the difference of approach between Godard and Claude Lanzmann, as well as more generally on issues of montage, citation, and the archive. Yet the work's immediate material and emotional impact constitutes a vital part of its overall achievement. As Godard puts it in one of his mantra-like formulae: "What is great is not the image but the emotion which it provokes." The extended sequence in Chapter 1A, for example, when he stages himself with his machine-gun-rattling typewriter gearing up to take hold of the beast of cinema as a microphone moves slowly into frame, is a moment of pure theatrical suspense and visual fascination. If Godard figures here personally as cinema's memory with montage serving as his individual signature, he is also visibly consumed and even shattered by the sheer excess of the sounds and images he calls up, in particular of the newsreels of the camps and wartime executions and the devastating scenes of torture from films like *Open City* (1945). And so is the viewer who, by force of identification and empathy, is brought face to face with the signs and stimuli of an Otherness that can be neither incorporated nor expelled.

Histoire(s) is an extraordinary statement of faith in the power of cinema still to affect us radically and, in so doing, help effect social change and greater human understanding. One of the many stills used throughout the work is taken from Bergman's early and relatively little known film, *The Devil's Wanton* (1949). Here we see the alcoholic journalist Thomas (Birger Malmsten) and the prostitute Birgitta (Doris Svedlund) huddled beside a cinematograph in their hideaway attic while looking out towards the viewer. It is the moment before they project a short, silent slapstick farce called "Death and the Devil" which temporarily reverses Birgitta's depression, allowing her to articulate the truth of her terrible past (the two subsequently fall in love, though their happiness is short-lived). Godard clings to this moment of cinematic innocence and promise, what he calls in *Histoire(s)* and elsewhere "the childhood of art" (not to be confused with the dream-work, the stuff of nightmares in *The Devil's Wanton*). The complex closing sequence of *Histoire(s)* that superimposes a yellow flower over an image of Godard's face, itself imposed over a reproduction of Francis Bacon's second *Study for a Portrait of Van Gogh* (1957), while Godard's voiceover recites Borges's transcription of Coleridge about waking from a paradisiac dream with a flower in his hands, ends with a simple statement charged with genuine pathos, "I was that man."

This final, almost sentimental resort to the romantic notion of the author signing off his individual work completes the clearest argument yet made by Godard for the crucial relevance of fiction and fantasy. Can the pioneering and uniquely challenging work of *Histoire(s)* in any way provide a blueprint for resistance to what Godard has just posited as the encroaching uniformity of the global super-present supplied by today's televisual and digital communications, where the different processes of history and memory, as well as of art and culture, all risk being flattened out? Probably not. What can be said, however, and *Histoire(s)* offers irrefutable proof, is that the forms of art—the forms that think—can help lay the basis for new forms of being. This is Godard's gift to us: a threnody of love.

"Dream factory." © 1988/1998 Gaumont

(Thanks to Michael Witt for his helpful comments.)

JAMES S. WILLIAMS is Professor of Modern French Literature and Film at Royal Holloway London.

ABSTRACT This essay reviews the DVD boxed set of Jean-Luc Godard's experimental, philosophical, argumentative video essay on the history of film and the twentieth century. The essay stresses Godard's remarkable use of montage to create new and provocative juxtapositions that carry unique emotional, historical, and political charge.

KEYWORDS Godard, the Holocaust, *nouvelle vague,* montage, film history.

DVD DATA *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Director: Jean-Luc Godard. © 1988/1998 Gaumont. Publisher: Gaumont Vidéo, 2007. €65.71, 4 discs.

BETWEEN DAYLIGHT AND DARKNESS: *FOREVER* AND *SILENT LIGHT*

WILLIAM JOHNSON REVIEWS TWO UNUSUAL FILMS WITH REMARKABLE FEATURES IN COMMON

Heddy Honigmann's *Forever* is a documentary about the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. It covers a remarkable range of people, alive and dead, and often leaps rapidly from one person (alive or dead) to another. Carlos Reygadas's *Silent Light* is a fictional film that focuses on a small group of people in rural Mexico and moves slowly on its way to—and beyond—a single death.

In addition to a focus on love and death, the two films have other features in common. While most of the dead celebrated in *Forever* are famous, the large number of the living who visit their tombs and talk to the camera are ordinary people, as are the non-professionals who make up the cast of *Silent Light*. The most direct and unexpected link between the two films comes toward the end, when they converge on similar extraordinary scenes.

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Honigmann's distinctive approach to documentary, which first impressed me in *Metal and Melancholy* (1993), does so once again in *Forever*. Here, though, there's a sharper edge. Her earlier films dealt with the problems and/or joys of people whose experiences most of her viewers are unlikely to share, such as: driving a cab in Lima, Peru, being an elderly Brazilian in Rio, trying to survive as an immigrant musician in Paris, or making the most of life as a Cuban immigrant in New Jersey. Viewers of different nationalities and backgrounds can be fascinated by and feel sympathy with those people but can't fully identify with them. *Forever*, which deals with death, is far from a gloomy film, but it does confront us with a reality that we're all bound to share sooner or later: losing friends and loved ones, and eventually reaching the end ourselves. We may not be fully aware of it, but we have a stake in what happens on screen.

Forever was filmed almost entirely inside the Père Lachaise cemetery, where famous people from various countries besides France are buried, along with many French residents who are not famous. Visitors to the tombs of the famous are paying tribute rather than mourning; but so, perhaps, are those visiting the graves of loved ones when time has passed. Some scenes, however, including excursions outside the cemetery, throw a different light on the distinction between tribute and mourning. *Forever* is by no means a straightforward lyrical celebration of the dead and their living admirers.

The film begins with shots of a few famous tombs where people have left flowers and messages, then leaps from old to new with a pile of freshly dug earth and a man engraving a new headstone. Now a woman approaches and asks us (it seems) for directions. Honigmann's voice replies from behind the camera, and from now on there are frequent exchanges between the unseen filmmaker and people on screen.

We see some people treating Père Lachaise as a park to stroll or sit in. Honigmann focuses at greater length on other visitors, virtually all middle-aged or elderly women, who are regulars. Many of them come on their own initiative to tend one or more tombs of the famous, washing and tidying them and leaving flowers. Several of them talk to the camera enthusiastically about the life and works of their chosen celebrities. Other women come alone to tend a husband's or a parent's grave, or simply to meet friends and sit on chairs together. Only one of the mourners shows grief, but with good reason: she and her late husband had known each other only for three years, he was twenty years younger than her, and the cause of his death was a simple bee sting.

For a few of the famous dead, such as Simone Signoret and Maria Callas, Honigmann brings them back to temporary life in film clips. For the rest, she has a variety of dialogues with admirers who come to pay their respects.

One admirer happens to be an official guide to the cemetery. The grave at which he spends the most time is that of Elisa Mercoeur, an early nineteenth-century poet who died at age twenty-six. Her mother had Elisa's poems engraved all around the outside of the tomb. Over time, however, the

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Carlos Reygadas on the set of *Silent Light*, with Cornelio Wall and Miriam Toews. Courtesy Tartan Films

walls have flaked away, carrying most of the poems with them. The guide points to one remaining fragment and reads it aloud, filling in its recent gaps from memory. Most people are familiar with old worn gravestones, but here the viewer shares the guide's experience of seeing much of a dead person's legacy also die.

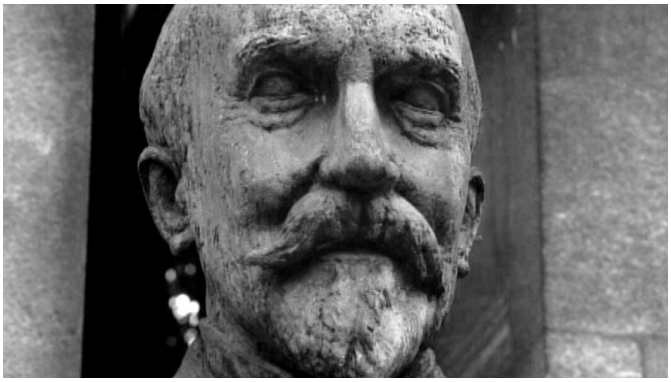
The film's most central figure among the famous dead is Marcel Proust, partly because his massive novel about time and memory is close to the theme of *Forever*. He attracts a wide range of admirers, beginning with a woman who regularly cleans his grave. There's also a small group of visitors who are asked by Honigmann whether they've read *In Search of Lost Time*. One started but gave up; the others didn't try; and they all leave smiling but quickly. Another visitor, a young South Korean man, answers "yes" to the same question, but when asked why he admires Proust says his English isn't good enough for him to explain. Honigmann invites him to speak in Korean. He does so spiritedly for a minute or more, without subtitles, and she thanks him. His obvious enthusiasm is answer enough.

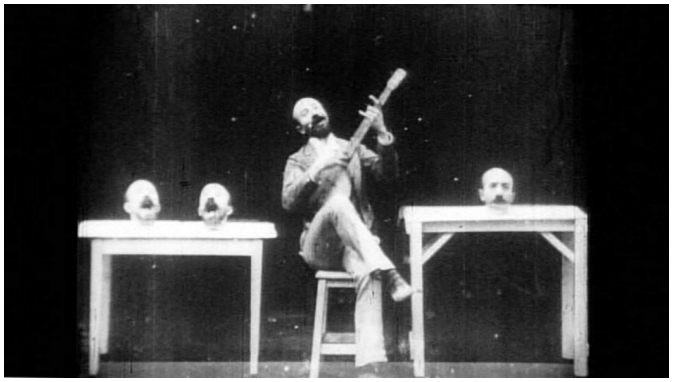
Another quirky encounter is with an immigrant cabbie from Iran who's at the tomb of writer Sedaq Hadayat. When he says he likes to sing Persian songs, Honigmann asks him to perform one for her film but he declines. She remains silent and keeps the camera running. Soon he brings out a book of poems and chants one of them with assurance.

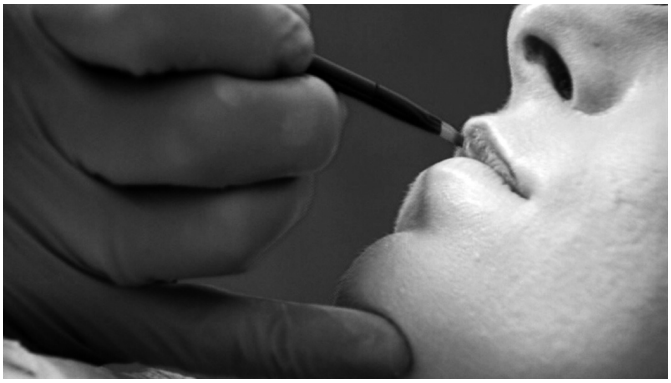
Honigmann gives music another and more extensive part to play, not as a routine background but as an unobtrusive framework for the whole film. That framework is established at the first famous tomb to appear in the film: Chopin's. A young Japanese woman, Yoshino Kimura, is placing flowers on it. We learn that her father, who died seven years ago, was an admirer of Chopin's music and that she's studying the piano professionally in Paris. From now on the film returns briefly to her apartment at various intervals as she practices a Chopin nocturne. Then, right at the end of the film, we see and hear her play the nocturne in its entirety for her first-ever public performance. While Honigmann's vocal presence provides continuity behind the camera, Kimura gives *Forever* both a visual and a nonverbally aural framework. Thus the film is able to cut frequently from place to place and moment to moment without disrupting the viewer's sense of its unity.

Some of *Forever*'s frequent cuts may, however, catch us by surprise. At one point we suddenly find ourselves outside the cemetery on a Paris street, following two blind men as they stride confidently along smacking their flexible white canes on the sidewalk ahead of them. They enter an apartment and settle down in front of a TV screen to "listen to" the movie *Diabolique* (1955), and for a while the camera holds on them as they vocally interpret the action from the sound track. Finally we're allowed to see the screen and the late Simone Signoret.

TAKING CARE OF THE DEAD IN *FOREVER*







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Forever is always potentially unpredictable. At Georges Méliès's tomb Honigmann inserts one of his short trick films, *A Man with Heads* (1898), in which four men, all played by Méliès, remove their heads, sing and talk, quarrel, and are finally reduced to one man. Cut to a close-up of a smiling bust of Méliès in front of his tomb. After the flat, washed-out black-and-white of the old movie, the detailed and solid-looking bust seems to exist in the viewer's present. It is, of course, as much in the past as the head(s) filmed by Méliès. In fact, for anyone watching the film, some of the people seen alive in *Forever* may already be dead.

The most unexpected and mysterious sight in the film is someone who *is* already dead. We take it for granted that cemeteries will keep their corpses well out of sight, and Père Lachaise does so. There, however, Honigmann interviews a man who admires Modigliani. It turns out that he's an embalmer, and the interview resumes when he's at work cleaning the face and hands of a dead woman and then gently intertwining her fingers. She looks young and attractive and shows no sign of illness or injury. Who is she and how was this arranged?

Honigmann responded to my question by email: "We had an agreement with a funeral agency [to find a corpse we could film]. They had read a synopsis [of the film] and agreed to [ask] permission. Paris was having a heat wave and the embalmer was expecting an old person." Instead, he received "this beautiful young person . . . We did not have any information [about her] and it was forbidden to ask for it."

Until this scene the film has given little indication of the dark side of death: just the grieving widow and the crumbling tomb of the young poet. The others who visit their departed loved ones seem to have accepted death. Visitors bring smiles rather than tears to the tombs of the famous. Méliès, Callas, and Signoret appear to come back to life. Even the tribute that Yoshino Kimura prepares for her late father suggests a kind of living connection with him. All along it has seemed that in the midst of death we are in life.

Now, however, the dead woman who looks merely sleeping reminds us of that saying's usual form. The film's title becomes ambiguous: is it death or life that goes on forever? Honigmann doesn't take sides, and the film offers no arguments between believers and atheists.

The filming of *Forever*, as distinct from its lengthy preparation, took place during just over a month in summer, so that the predominant exteriors are marked with cheerful sunlight. Only during the end credits do nocturnal shadows dominate the screen. Of the film as a whole, however, Honigmann says, "I found much more life in what I was filming than I expected."

⁂

At first, Carlos Reygadas's *Silent Light* seems to have nothing in common with *Forever*. It's set in a rural area of the north Mexican state of Chihuahua. The people who live in the area are Mennonites, descendants of a nonconformist Christian sect that had suffered persecution in Europe. The forebears of this particular group settled in Mexico in 1922. The film is fictional, but the cast consists entirely of Mennonites with no professional acting experience.

Non-professionals played important roles in Reygadas's two previous full-length films. *Japan* (2002), set in Mexico, deals with a big-city artist who becomes involved with a rural family; *Battle in Heaven* (2005), about a kidnapping that goes wrong, is set entirely in a big city. With *Silent Light* Reygadas turns to a group of rural people in a rural setting and offers an apparently simple drama set between an extraordinary prelude and postlude.

At the beginning the screen is filled with a kind of inchoate dimness that slowly takes shape as a night sky, the stars only vaguely discernible. Gradually the sky brightens to reveal a foreground of trees and a field with a few farm animals. The film ends with the same sequence in reverse (the sky now clouded), taking the the viewer back from daylight into universal darkness. What happens in between is suspended between the mysteries of dawn and darkness, birth and death.

The first human scene shows Johan (Cornelio Wall), wife Esther (Miriam Toews), and their six children seated at the breakfast table in silent and motionless prayer, which continues longer than most filmmakers would dare to hold it. After the meal Esther leaves with the children while Johan remains seated and begins to sob. A visit to his friend Zacarias (Jacobo Klassen), who repairs farm equipment, reveals the problem: Johan is in love with another woman, Marianne (Maria Pankratz). Clearly Zacarias, along with Esther and probably everyone else in the small settlement, knows about Johan's affair.

The loud mechanical noises and radio music of the workers at Zacarias's workplace stand out not only from the near silence at Johan's and Esther's home but from virtually all of the scenes that follow. For a few moments Johan, jolted out of his gloom, starts singing and drives his truck in dance-like circles. Then all appears calm again. After walking to a brief and silent meeting with Marianne, Johan is back with his family, all bathing together in a small woodland pond. It's a tranquil and literally reflective scene in which daylight on the water conceals the body parts below and suggests a vision of innocence.

***Silent Light*: funeral and sunset.** Courtesy Tartan Films

So far, in spite of the prolonged dawn squence, the time frame of the film appears straightforward: the scenes could all have taken place in a summer day or two. But now it becomes clear that the diegetic time of the film must be longer —even (as Reygadas told me in a telephone interview) as much as three years. Instead of summer sunshine there is darkness and snow on the ground as Johan visits his father (Peter Wall), a dairy farmer and preacher, to tell him about Marianne and ask his advice. His father reacts almost with detachment, saying that he himself fell for another woman before Johan was born but gave her up. Johan insists that his marriage to Esther was a mistake that he should rectify. His father mildly says he's envious but wouldn't want to be in the same situation, and Johan must decide soon. With that small amount of help Johan leaves.

Back at the farm, winter long over, Esther is driving a harrow that rips up the remains of harvested crops. (This scene not only indicates her farming practicality but also suggests her suppressed anger at Johan's infidelity.) Marianne arrives and says she needs help from Johan in the nearest town. Esther calmly says he should take two of their younger children along for dental check-ups. Johan does so, but then leaves the children with an acquaintance while he goes to Marianne's place for unhurried sex. Afterward, however, she says, "This was the last time. Peace is stronger than love." Johan doesn't argue but merely says "I don't know how I'll live without you."

So far Johan's affair seems to have caused no open anger or conflict. Now that it's ending, however, trouble begins. The film shifts from a series of near-vignettes to a continually mounting climax.

Johan and Esther are driving in their car. (Where are they going? "Perhaps to visit some friends," said Reygadas. "It's not important.") Esther is angry, then seems to calm down, but says that when she was happy she felt part of the world, and now she does not. Johan says he feels the same. With that odd tension in the air they drive on, turning from unpaved roads onto a highway. Heavy rain starts to fall and there's still no sign of an end to the journey. As they drive on silently through rain-blurred surroundings the tension and sense of displacement increases, as if Esther and Johan are no longer part of a real world. Suddenly Esther says she feels sick and yells at Johan to stop the car. She gets out, orders Johan not to follow her, and wanders through the pouring rain to a large tree, sobbing. After a short while Johan goes to find her and carries her back to the car.

At a hospital, a doctor tells Johan that Esther has died of a heart attack.

After the bleakness and disorientation of the long drive and its outcome, the funeral ceremony in Johan's home seems at first like a warm contrast. A large attendance of adults and children, along with unaccompanied chanting and the read-

Resurrection in *Ordet*. © 1943 Svensk Filmindustri. DVD: BFI (U.K.)

ing aloud of holy texts, fills the screen and soundtrack with more human density than in any earlier scenes. But then, after Johan's parents and Esther's mother prepare the corpse, Johan kneels by the open coffin and doesn't want to leave. To his father he blames himself for Esther's death; to Zacarias he says he would give anything to turn back time.

Now the film enters another kind of complexity. Marianne arrives at Johan's home. In her previous scenes she was a generic "other woman" figure. Now she pauses outside the house in a striking close shot of her head and broad-brimmed white hat as she holds up a hand to shade her eyes from the sun. She tells Johan she'd like to see Esther. Alone in the room she kisses Esther on the mouth, and slowly the dead woman's face begins to move and come to life. Then Authge, Esther's youngest child, comes in and sees her alive. Finally Johan enters the room. He hears Authge talking, but before he (or we) can see Esther the film cuts to its postlude, returning from daylight to the darkness of the night sky.

Although many reviewers have compared the resurrection of Esther to that of Inger (Birgitte Federspiel) in Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Ordet* (1955), the circumstances are quite different. Inger dies in childbirth with a husband, Mikkel (Emil Hass Christensen), who loves her. After the efforts of a mentally disturbed brother-in-law who believes he's Jesus, she's unambiguously shown returning to life. Esther dies of a heart attack after believing that her husband wants to reject her, and viewers can't tell for sure whether she has really been resurrected or whether they're seeing the imagination of Marianne and Authge, with Johan's entry too brief to support either side. Or perhaps the whole sequence could be Johan's imagination, with Marianne's kiss of life projecting his desperate need for a reconciliation between wife and former mistress.

In any case, the sequence involves a remarkably similar tension to *Forever*'s embalming scene, but in reverse: there it's not only a surprise to see a corpse in sudden close-up but it's also hard to believe that the young woman is really dead, while Miriam Toews, playing Esther, remains so uncannily immobile during the lengthy scenes before Marianne's entry that it's almost as hard to believe that she's really alive.

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Forever and *Silent* Light have other features in common, though less immediately striking than real and apparent death. The continual succession of different people and situations in *Forever* has its counterpart *in Silent Light*'s visual compression of time, with straight cuts representing gaps of any length up to months. Its unusual setting within a "different" group requires the viewer to watch and listen intently for clues to what is happening, just as much as with *Forever*'s chain of unexpected incidents and people. And just as Kimura's recital at the end of *Forever* reveals a pattern behind the film's profusion, the full complexity of *Silent Light* emerges only in Esther's funeral ceremony.

At the same time, even a cemetery rich in dead celebrities isn't an obvious choice for a lively and engrossing film. It's easy to imagine a respectful and dull documentary that would bypass the opportunities for insight, humor, provocation, and imagination that Honigmann continually seizes. What the two films share most deeply in common is the confidence of their creators in the different risks they were taking.

WILLIAM JOHNSON is a former New York Editor of *Film Quarterly*.

ABSTRACT This comparative essay deals with two films, *Forever* (a documentary about the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris directed by Heddy Honigman), and *Silent Light* (a fiction film set among Mexican Mennonites, and featuring a non-professional cast directed by Carlos Reygadas), both of which focus on love and death.

KEYWORDS Heddy Honigman, Carlos Reygadas, Père Lachaise, documentary, Ordet, Mexican cinema

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SPIRALING DOWNWARD: AMERICA IN *DAYS OF HEAVEN*, *IN THE VALLEY OF ELAH*, AND *NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN*

JOAN MELLEN ARGUES THAT THREE FILMS SET IN THE ICONIC SOUTHWEST SHOULD BE READ POLITICALLY

On the day that the first European settler disembarked on this continent and noticed the inconvenient truth that there were people already here, the American character was hatched. In *Days of Heaven* (1978), newly restored in a director-approved digital transfer in the Criterion Collection, Terrence Malick picked up the chronicle of America's political and cultural identity in the early years of the twentieth century. For Malick, the returns were already in.

Days of Heaven unfolds in 1916 and 1917. *No Country for Old Men* is set in 1980, in an explicitly post-Vietnam after math, and assesses the damage sixty-four years after the events in Malick's film. Following closely Cormac McCarthy's novel, the Coen brothers depict the endgame of a society so at war with itself that there is scant respite even for the one brief lyrical moment that Malick depicts. The drive for personal gain in the early years of the republic is depicted in *Days of Heaven*. Now extended globally, its consequences emerge in the Coen and Paul Haggis films.

In the Valley of Elah may be viewed as a coda to *No Country for Old Men*, with a parallel theme, that America's young men drilled and educated so as to fight America's expansionist foreign wars have been morally damaged at the same time as the national ethos. Although the films view these veterans as victims no less than executioners, this theme has not been noticed by critics; it may, however, explain the failure at the box office of the Haggis film. It is unmistakable that the highly trained soldiers and former soldiers in *In the Valley of Elah* and *No Country for Old Men*, formidably skilled in violence and survival, have become deformed human beings, more or less tormented by their experiences. This harrowing conjunction of professionalism and brutalization may be read as a metaphor for the entropy of contemporary America; all three films are, I would argue, significant contributions to the political discourse of these times.

McCarthy's uncompromising novel references Vietnam a number of times. With a nod to the exigencies of commercial cinema, the Coens' film does so only twice, when Lieutenant Colonel Carson Wells (Woody Harrelson) asks Llewelyn Moss (Josh Brolin), "were you in Nam?" and later at the Mexican border where Moss gains re-entry to the U.S. when the guard learns that Moss served two tours. Yet it is clear that Anton Chigurh (Javier Bardem), Moss, and Wells all honed their murderous skills in the jungles of Southeast Asia. Moss enters the film shooting pointlessly at a herd of antelope in the absence of human targets; the novel relates that he had been a sniper in Vietnam. (Dogs die with the humans in this film, all species vulnerable.) "Vietnam was the icing on the cake," McCarthy writes. The Coens omit Deputy Wendell's remark as he and Sheriff Bell survey the death scene of Mexicans in their dope-laden trucks: "It must of sounded like Vietnam out here." "Vietnam," the sheriff repeats somberly.

The West Texas prairie is the setting of *Days of Heaven* and *No Country for Old Men* (the Coens' *Blood Simple* [1984], the film of theirs most like this one, also took place in Texas). Haggis locates his film a stone's-throw away, in New Mexico. Any connection to the Western, however, is tenuous. Given that what is at stake is a monstrous distortion of the human, these films have more in common with science fiction. (Questioned about his character in an interview for the *Los Angeles Times*, Bardem said: "He belongs to somewhere else. I'm not saying from outer space, but [he] belongs mentally to someplace else.")

Sheriff Bell in *No Country for Old Men* and Hank Deerfield in *In the Valley of Elah*, both characters played by Tommy Lee Jones, are defeated by men who are hybrids, grotesque mutations produced by America's wars of empire.

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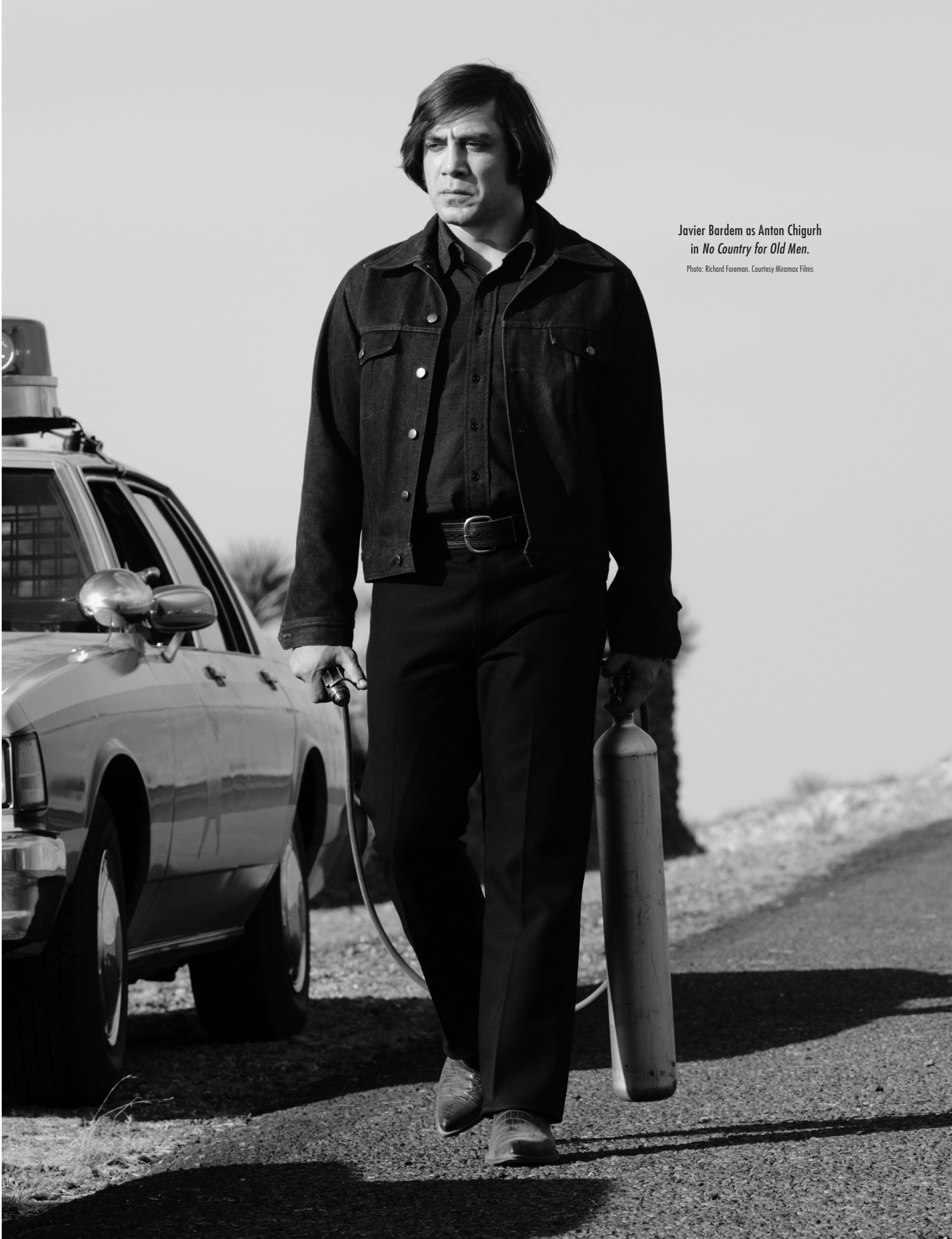

Javier Bardem as Anton Chigurh
in *No Country for Old Men.*

Photo: Richard Foreman. Courtesy Miramax Films

Among these morally mutilated beings is Hank's own son, a Bible-reading boy of conventional uprightness before he was shipped to Iraq. When Mike (Jonathan Tucker) telephoned and pleaded, "Dad, get me out of here!" Hank, a Vietnam veteran, urged him to carry on. That call, repeated several times in flashback, expresses cinematically the father's sense of his own guilt.

What McCarthy explicitly calls a "new kind," a reflexive yet entirely lucid sadist, has been let loose on the American landscape. The man left standing at the close of *No Country for Old Men* is the stone-cold killer Chigurh, played with unerring skill by Bardem, who is barely recognizable as the same actor who played, again with virtuosity, the gay Cuban poet in Julian Schnabel's *Before Night Falls* (2000). Unrelenting, unflinching, able to minister to his own wounds, Chigurh is a paragon of military discipline, who seems to have extinguished all compassion. In its place is a chilling rationality and rigor, an absolute commitment to self-assigned objectives. Bardem, in conveying this, also gives him a slight air of boredom and impatience, trace elements of humanity. Only vestigially human, this creature is likened in the novel to the "bubonic plague" (a plague of locusts descends in *Days of Heaven*, but as a form of poetic justice).

Chigurh, with the irony of Moss's mistaking his name for the word "sugar," and sounding more like "chigger," a parasitic larva of the harvest mite, is a descendant of Joseph Conrad's Kurtz, the emissary of "pity, science and progress" who ends up a murderous madman. Kurtz decorated his Congo encampment with the shrunken heads of his victims. Chigurh murders with the hi-tech air gun used in abattoirs to dispatch cattle. Specialist Bonner (Jake McLaughlin) in *In the Valley of Elah*, a butcher by trade before he joined up, cuts his comrade-in-arms into pieces and tosses his body parts into an open field to be feasted on by passing wildlife.

These men, having returned from Vietnam and Iraq, have grown, in varying degrees, like Kurtz, addicted to killing. The soldiers and former soldiers in *No Country for Old Men* and *In the Valley of Elah* surpass Kurtz in one respect: they have brought their atrocities home. Both films depict a precipitous decline in the moral fiber of American society where the safety of its citizens has become, as never before, a virtual anachronism.

A SICKENED SOCIAL ORDER

Malick dates America's deterioration from the moment a rapacious industrialism enveloped America and the class divide widened vastly. A sepia montage of bedraggled immigrants accompanies the opening credits. In the first sequence, set in a deafening Chicago factory, Bill (Richard Gere), provoked, murders the steel-mill foreman. Bill escapes on a freight train of immigrants selling their labor to the farmers out West in the company of his fourteen-year-old sister, Linda (Linda Manz), and his girlfriend Abby (Brooke Adams). They encounter conditions as barbaric as those they faced in the urban ghettoes of Chicago.

So long as there are owners and those who sell their labor, everyone will suffer: the Farmer (Sam Shepard), called "Will" only once in the film, is defined by his social role. His function is the accumulation of personal wealth and property. When he desires Abby, he can have her, although Bill and Abby believe they are conning him—a dying man—to better their lives.

With references to Revelations, Malick suggests that class society awaits a final irrevocable judgment. Malick's surrogate is Linda, who in voiceover comments mostly on the relationship between her brother and Abby and the Farmer who controls the lives of those he hires, and discards them when the harvest is done: "Some people need more than they got, others got more than they need." "You didn't work," she says, "they'd ship you right out of there. They didn't need you. They could always get somebody else." And: "Whoever was sitting in the chair when he [the Farmer] came around, they'd get up and give it to him." (However, Linda is not entirely reliable. Of the Farmer, she concludes, "there was no harm in him," as she insists that her brother and Abby were "kind-hearted." Later Linda amends her assessment, concluding that there are no perfect people, that all are "half-devil, half-angel.")

The walnut-carved, Victorian-style chair is upholstered in rose brocade. Placed incongruously out on the open prairie, it is as anomalous an object as the social relations that are distorted. Medical care is reserved for the Farmer; the hired hands must steal medicine and, like livestock, live outside in the open. Slow dissolves punctuate this film as one shot merges slowly into another. Malick reveals how for people like Bill, Abby, and Linda one day is exactly like the next. Bill had promised Abby that "things aren't always going to be this way." Malick renders these words ironic with a clip from Chaplin's *The Immigrant* (1917). The immigrants toiling in the Farmer's fields look forward only to a future inhabited by Chaplin's tramp.

The superb cinematographer Nestor Almendros's extraordinarily beautiful shots of nature look back with nostalgia on the unrealized possibilities of an America with bounty for all. Already by the early twentieth century the gulf between rich and poor has widened exponentially. Malick

DAYS OF HEAVEN: WORLD GONE WRONG

© 1978 Paramount Pictures. DVD: Criterion Collection, 2007

expresses this idea through imagery of the grotesque, beginning with the ornate three-story Victorian mansion rising out of the prairie. Reconstructing Edward Hopper's *House by the Railroad* (1925), the imagery also suggests the despair of the Andrew Wyeth painting, *Christina's World* (1948).

The verticality of the house where the Farmer alone enjoys the creature comforts of civilization simulates a knife stuck into the peaceful horizontal golden fields of wheat. In one shot, Almendros interrupts an otherwise steadily moving pan to pause on the aberrant mansion rising out of the earth. In another, the dissolve is so retarded that the mansion, a symbol of inequality, appears twice in the same frame. Other shots, similarly, are rebukes to class society. In extreme close-up, the locusts, a judgment on the inexorable decline of America as a class society, chew obliviously on the harvest (some were glued to the stalks of wheat). Their mandibles moving, unstoppable, they foretell the bitter future of a social system that reserves its benefits for the few.

Malick and Almendros decided that no blue sky suggest that things are destined soon to be otherwise. Many shots are backlit, while fields of four-foot-tall glowing wheat symbolize the wealth concentrated in the hands of one man. The immigrant drones are profiled like insects, silhouettes against the horizon, deprived of the luxury of individuality. Darkened silhouettes, their features are not articulated; it was Almendros's persistent method to add no supplemental light to the exteriors.

Sheriff Bell cannot imagine that Chigurh, having captured the drug money, with Moss and Wells both dead, would go back and kill Carla Jean simply because he has vowed to do so.

The signature shot is the low angle looking up, an angle enjoyed by all the characters, to express the director's point of view, his egalitarian spirit that will not privilege the rich. In one scene, Bill and Will sit side by side, doubles. With Malick cutting from one in close-up to the other, keeping them apart, as the class hierarchy so ordered, Bill confides that one day he woke up and realized he would never "make a score." They are two young dark-haired men, one with more money than he can ever hope to spend, the other with no prospects at all, and each murderous when crossed. One could easily have been the other. As their characters merge into each other, both lovers of Abby, the slow dissolve renders them equals.

In a shot that comes late in the film, a train bearing President Woodrow Wilson steams through the Farmer's land without stopping; conventional politics promise no relief. With metaphoric flamboyance, Malick adds a conflagration to the climax of the film, as if only a complete purging will redeem the sickened social order; the fire culminates in Bill's murder of the Farmer with a screwdriver.

The fire expresses the film's moral judgment. The Farmer had no right to love Abby, and no right to build his happiness on another man's misery, and he pays for it. At the end, mindlessly joyful recruits board a train for the killing fields of World War I, Abby among them, her freedom as illusory as the Farmer's.

Linda, strolling aimlessly down a railroad track to nowhere, hopes things will "work out" for her friend. Of her own prospects, she says nothing because she knows she has none. It is now 1917, year of the Bolshevik Revolution, reinforcing Malick's unsentimental invocation of the hindsights of history and what might have been.

WITHOUT VANITY OR MOTIVE

No Country for Old Men is set on a flatter landscape of West Texas desolation where nature can no longer be enlisted even ironically as a metaphor of transcendence. The opening montage of shots devoid of human habitation emerges under a white sky as Sheriff Ed Tom Bell offers his first monologue in voiceover. The level of urgency has risen, even as the Coens, like Malick, depict a society devoid of safety, tranquility, or solace.

In place of Malick's low-angle shots, the Coens offer rhythmically the extreme high overhead angle. They look down on Chigurh killing a deputy, or cleaning his leg wound in a bathtub, or Moss entering a gun store. The Coens distance themselves from events that no one has hope of mediating. The high angle creates an abiding sense that the film itself is frightened of Chigurh. McCarthy in his novel pauses for moments of explanation: "fortunes been accumulated out there that they don't nobody even know about. What do we think is goin to come of that money. Money that can buy whole countries." The Coens rely on the image.

Motive in this America, as Malick already predicted, is a luxury and an irrelevance. Moss takes the $2 million of Mexican drug money he comes upon by chance without ever articulating why, even as he knows the danger he faces. "Things happen, I can't take them back," says Moss, a descendant of Robert Altman's entrepreneur, John McCabe (Warren Beatty) in *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (1971), making his way only to fall into the death machinery of the Harrison-

No Country for Old Men: Ethan Coen and Joel Coen, Josh Brolin as Llewelyn Moss, Tommy Lee Jones as Sheriff Bell, Kelly Macdonald as Carla Jean Moss. Photos: Richard Foreman. Courtesy Miramax Films

Shaughnessy mining company. Their enforcer Butler (Hugh Millais) is a direct ancestor of Chigurh, who also does not "make deals."

Chigurh murders not for greed or personal gain, or because he has any loyalty to the greedy oil entrepreneurs operating out of Houston skyscrapers but because, as he says in his most revealing line, a throwaway, "That's the way it is." His semi-Buster Brown/Prince Valiant haircut—neatly tucked under, and adding an asexual aspect to his appearance—bespeaks a man without vanity. The haircut was, the Coens have said, modeled on a photograph of a man at a border whorehouse. Chigurh expects nothing for himself from anyone, but as the sheriff concludes, it would be too easy to call him insane. It would render Chigurh a special case, implying that his elimination could restore society to its natural order.

Because the verbal is never reliable for these directors, the last words Moss speaks in person to his wife Carla Jean (Kelly Macdonald) are an ironic reprise of General Douglas MacArthur, a man of another era, who made good on his promise. "I shall return," Moss smiles. He will not. He is murdered off screen, an event dramatized by a rare fade. This fade arrives without warning, and is the film's symbolic requiem for ordinary young men like Moss, a welder by trade, and a descendant of Malick's Bill.

The Coens leave out McCarthy's scene of Moss's death, which occurs when one of the Mexican thugs holds a gun to a hitchhiker's head and demands that if Moss does not drop his gun, he will shoot her. Moss complies. The Mexican then shoots them both. McCarthy underlines the difference between the two men: Chigurh would not have cared; Moss calls her "Little Sister."

Having been a colonel in Vietnam and no mean killer himself, Wells tells Moss that Chigurh is "not like you. He's not even like me." Sheriff Bell is capable of a loyal and lasting relationship with his wife, Loretta (Tess Harper), of genuine love (the Coens in a misstep don't include the moment when Loretta bites his ear, indicating that sexuality remains intact

In the Valley of Elah: Tommy Lee Jones as Hank Deerfield, Victor Wolf as Private Robert Ortiez. Courtesy Optimum Releasing

for these aging people). Moss is affectionate and loyal toward Carla Jean. But, as Malick relied on a pattern, the love of two men for one woman, the Coens present a downward spiral of human character moving between the sheriff, a good if flawed man, to Moss and Wells, who are transitional figures, and then to irredeemable Chigurh. The directors convey the possibility that the differences between Moss and Chigurh are transitory.

What defines the "new kind," the new American, and the evil that Sheriff Bell "doesn't understand," is their similarities. Both men have been fashioned out of the crucible of imperial war, and both have absorbed the lessons necessary for their survival. Both reveal a professional knowledge of all types of guns, although Moss never kills anyone in the film. "Hold still please, sir," Chigurh urges his second victim. "You hold still," Moss whispers to the distant antelope. Later Chigurh, out of the same reflexive impulse, shoots at a random innocent black bird (he misses). Both have become involved in the drug trade, and in an understated moment, as Moss alights at a motel, he phones a Mexican named Roberto, only to reach an answering machine. Covered with blood, expressionless, Chigurh and Moss keep going. Shot, they tend to their own wounds. Both buy clothing from bewildered passers-by using hundred-dollar bills from the drug money.

They are connected by sound bridges; they are connected over cuts. We believe we are in a cab with Moss only for Chigurh to be behind the wheel. One shot at the Eagle Pass Hotel, from so low an angle that we see only boots, is confusing, temporarily: are we inside Moss's hotel room, or outside in the corridor with Chigurh?

As for Bell, whose less-than-heroic World War II experiences are recounted only in McCarthy's novel, he drinks from the same bottle of milk still sweating from Chigurh's having only moments earlier removed it from the refrigerator in Moss's abandoned trailer. Sheriff Bell cannot imagine that Chigurh, having captured the drug money, with Moss and Wells both dead, would go back and kill Carla Jean simply because he has vowed to do so. "We're looking at somethin we really ain't even seen before," Bell says in the novel, echoing Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*: "I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low."

"Who *are* these people?" the sheriff asks, rhetorically, while the Coens dramatize the reply: they are ordinary

Americans, playing out the atrocities of Vietnam where you shot without seeing the enemy, where you shot compulsively into the darkness.

"OVERMATCHED"

In *In the Valley of Elah*, Hank Deerfield, likewise, cannot at first comprehend the deformity that has been visited on those who have been fighting America's wars. "You do not fight beside a man and do something like that to him," Hank says, with dramatic irony. Haggis dramatizes his Dostoevskyian premise without qualification: if you can thrust your hand into a detainee's wound to make him scream, as Mike Deerfield did, you can do anything, as Mike's own buddies do when, over a petty spat, they stab him repeatedly, then carve up his body with a butcher knife.

A victim he may be, but Iraq has corrupted Mike no less. In a scene from the shooting script that did not make the final cut, Mike visits a girlfriend now in hospital, a double amputee returned from Iraq. The parts he was interested in still work, he tells her, with as little pity as Chigurh. In a reiteration of the same theme that was retained in the film, a soldier strangles and drowns his Doberman in the bathtub only later to do the same thing to his terrified wife. At the end, Hank hangs upside down the American flag his son sent from Iraq, having explained earlier in a didactic yet important moment what the gesture means: "It's an international distress signal . . . it means we are in a whole lot of trouble, so come save our ass, cause we haven't got a prayer in hell of saving ourselves."

What links these films to *Days of Heaven*, and to Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, is that they offer similar commentaries on America's history and identity. Near the end of *No Country for Old Men* a slow, elegiac dissolve brings Sheriff Bell to his uncle Ellis (Barry Corbin), an old-time law man. "I feel overmatched," Bell says in his most important line, original to the film. Ellis offers no solace; there is nothing they can do to stop what the El Paso lawman (Rodger Boyce) called, on the occasion of Moss's death, "the dismal tide."

Ellis recounts how their Texas Ranger uncle Mac was "gunned down on his own porch" by a band of seven or eight men, "ahead of him," as Chigurh throughout the film has always been a step ahead of Sheriff Bell. After a while, one of them "said something in Indian," and then they rode off. (The Coens place this event in 1909, but McCarthy, with a wider historical dimension, reflecting a sense of reprisal, chose 1879. McCarthy's line, "one of em said something in injun," remains.)

Days of Heaven, a masterpiece, and *No Country for Old Men* are the more accomplished works, although the Coens' film benefits hugely from the distinction of its source novel. The absence of thematic explicitness allows Bill and Chigurh and Moss to become paradigms for the American character rather than mere wayward individuals. Yet all three films ask implicitly the same question, one spoken in McCarthy's novel: "How come people don't feel like this country has got a lot to answer for?"

Vietnam symbolizes the historical crime, so that in McCarthy's novel, at the moment of his death, Carson Wells suddenly remembers "the body of a child dead in a roadside ravine in another country." The analogue is the photograph Haggis intercuts several times: the corpse of a child in Iraq, run over by Mike and his comrades and then left abandoned by the side of a dusty road.

"What you've got ain't nothing new," Ellis says. The misery began with the settlers invading the continent. The stain of imperial domination, first at home at the moment of America's creation, and later in Vietnam and Iraq, has borne an accelerating historical legacy, symbolized by the spreading pool of Wells's blood. Anton Chigurh is America's signature future, while Bell and his alter ego Hank Deerfield have found themselves no longer living in the country in which they were born.

Abrupt endings work best for these historical meditations on a country close to hitting bottom. Linda disappears without a future. Sheriff Bell, a broken, idle man, sits at his kitchen table, empty of occupation and usefulness to the community he had served since he was a twenty-five-year-old lawman. Defeated, he recounts his dreams to his wife, ending with the line, "And then I woke up," which is also Cormac McCarthy's final sentence.

So the Coens and the novelist urge us all to do.

JOAN MELLEN is a *Film Quarterly* Writer-at-Large.

ABSTRACT Bringing together the DVD reissue of Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven,* Paul Haggis's *In the Valley of Elah,* and Joel and Ethan Coen's *No Country for Old Men,* this essay argues that the three films are indictments of the violent history of American militarism.

KEYWORDS Terrence Malick, Paul Haggis, Coen brothers, Cormac McCarthy, *Heart of Darkness*

CREDITS *In the Valley of Elah.* Director, producer, screenplay: Paul Haggis. Producers: Patrick Wachsberger, Steven Samuels, Darlene Caamaño Loquest, Laurence Becsey. Cinematographer: Roger Deakins. Editor: Jo Francis. Music: Mark Isham. © 2007 Elah Finance V.O.F. U.S. distribution: Warner Bros.

No Country for Old Men. Directors, screenplay (based on the novel by Cormac McCarthy), producers: Joel Coen, Ethan Coen. Producer: Scott Rudin. Cinematographer: Roger Deakins. Editor: Roderick Jaynes. Music: Carter Burwell. © 2007 Miramax Film Corp., Paramount Pictures. U.S. distribution: Miramax Films.

DVD DATA *Days of Heaven.* Director: Terrence Malick. © 1978 Paramount Pictures Corporation. Publisher: Criterion Collection, 2007. $39.95, 1 disc.

THE WIRE: THE COMPLETE FOURTH SEASON

J. M. TYREE SALUTES THE LATEST DVD RELEASE OF AN EPIC TV DRAMA

In hindsight it may not seem entirely overblown to call *The Wire* part of a television renaissance that flourished in the original HBO adult dramas at the turn of the twenty-first century. Credit the Medici-like largesse of HBO; there was something decidedly Florentine about how the funding kept coming through for such a ratings dog. It continued broadcasting *The Wire* through its fourth season—and now its fifth and final season—despite an unmistakeable lack of broad commercial appeal. Perhaps HBO views *The Wire* as the kind of critically acclaimed "loss leader" that generates respect for the entire brand.

David Simon, producer of *The Wire* along with Ed Burns, suggests that it was lucky the show was broadcast several times a day. Rather than forcing viewers to tune in to a particular show at a particular moment, HBO's subscription-based menu also eased away from the network revenue model based upon sponsorship dollars for a specific number of eyeballs—especially true in the age of on-demand cable. Because people subscribed to the whole channel rather than individual shows, HBO could afford to take more risks without losing much revenue. The result is some of the best American television drama since *The Twilight Zone*, *Twin Peaks*, and *Homicide*, the 1990s NBC series that was based upon Simon's non-fiction book about the Baltimore Police Department, and which in turn launched several characters into the endless *Law and Order* franchise. Along with *The Sopranos* and *The Wire*, the bizarre supernatural spectacular *Carnivale* and the profane Wild West soap opera *Deadwood* contributed to what in television terms would have to be classed as an art movement. (There is even an inside joke at the expense of HBO in the fourth season of *The Wire*; an ex-gangster hospitalized with a gunshot wound in a city hospital watches *Benson* on network TV from his bed, while the patient next to him, who has private insurance, has *Deadwood* piped in.)

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"It seems to be a cop show, blue lights flashing," Simon says in his audio commentary on the very first episode of the very first season. But, he adds, "This show's really about the American city and about how we try to live together." *The Wire* has cops-and-robbers trappings—wiretap cases against drug gangs conducted by the Baltimore Police Department. It shares *Homicide*'s wonderfully offbeat crime-scene banter, although not its rapid-fire docudrama editing style. *Homicide* was a recognizable take on the network cop show. *The Wire* is many more things: an ongoing investigation into police corruption, brutality, and incompetence; an unflinching portrait of politics and race relations in an ex-great American city; an exhaustive refutation of the futile War on Drugs; and, above all, an extraordinarily honest depiction of the gravitational pull of the streets and drug "corners" for a generation of African American inner-city youth with few other prospects or opportunities.

Another running sideline is a gallows-humor analysis of the shift of police resources from the War on Drugs to the War on Terror. In both battles, procedures and institutions snuff out any hope for realistic strategy. Over the course of season 4 we witness the destruction of several lives simply because a hapless cop, Thomas "Herc" Hauk (Domenick Lombardozzi), loses a police video camera and tries to cover it up. *The Wire*'s emphasis on surveillance—particularly its repeated theme of the value of human informants versus technological eavesdropping—is a timely critique of the law-enforcement approach to both Baltimore crime and international terrorism. "If terrorists fucked up the west side, would anyone even notice?" one jaded cop asks during a fatuous homeland-security briefing on biochemical attacks. The cop refers to one of Baltimore's worst neighborhoods, one called a "fucking Falluja" filled with "tank traps" by mayoral candidate Tommy Carcetti (played by Irish actor Aiden Gillen). Later in the series, a police officer suggests that airstrikes are the answer to the city's problem districts. If America can't fix Baltimore, why does it dream of fixing places like Baghdad?

The Wire: Namond (Julito McCullum), Michael (Tristan Wilds), Randy (Maestro Harrell) in the front row. Photo: HBO / Paul Schradi

Why has the Federal government's obsession with shadowy external threats replaced any concern with crumbling domestic infrastructure? Why are we building border walls and installing surveillance cameras instead of levees, clinics, and schools? The questions posed here to Imperial America are unanswerable.

The end of season 3 saw the last days of a more intimate empire, the Barksdale drug gang, whose triggermen and kingpin have been jailed, and whose mastermind, Stringer Bell (Idris Elba), has died in a hail of bullets. Hackney-born Elba—some of *The Wire*'s most memorable characters are not played by Americans—wrought a fully human and tragic figure of Bell, at times using only a steeping cup of tea or a pair of reading glasses to express a full range of emotions. The demise of the Barksdale crew has not led to a new era in Baltimore without drugs or crime, but simply to the rise of a younger and harder player, Marlo Stanfield (Jamie Hector). Marlo isn't without a soft spot (for pigeons), and Hector plays the new kingpin with a strangely restrained empathy using little more than his intense eyes. But the character is no Bell, with secret aspirations to be a legitimate businessman. Marlo is not even interested in the sentimental gangster values of "family" peddled by Old School types like the Barksdales.

After *The Wire*, Simon, Burns, and HBO plan to broadcast *Generation Kill*, an account of U.S. Marines in Iraq, and Marlo seems a homegrown version of that same *Grand Theft Auto* youth culture. At one point he has a security guard at a corner store executed for "talking back" after witnessing him steal two lollipops. "You want it be to one way," Marlo tells the guard during their confrontation, explaining his impending death as if from a deep moral sleep, "but it's the other way." In business, however, Marlo orders killings not for fun but to be on the safe side, eventually breaking the long-established code of the streets in the process.

Marlo's enforcers, Chris Partlow (Gbenga Akinnagbe) and Felicia "Snoop" Pearson (played by Felicia Pearson in a real-life nod to her own criminal past), are singularly eerie screen assassins, mainly because their job brings them neither pleasure nor guilt. Chris soothes his victims before dispatching them ("Got you covered"), while Snoop's broken but sonorous voice, along with her buckets of quicklime and her gravedigger's lantern, broaches the territory of the

"It's another way": Jamie Hector as Marlo; Chris (Gbenga Akinnagbe) and Snoop (Felicia Pearson). © 2007 Home Box Office

uncanny. The season opens with Snoop purchasing a high-end nail gun, which she and Chris use to entomb their victims in abandoned row houses boarded up with "IF ANIMAL TRAPPED" signs replacing their windows. Ravaged by guns, drugs, neglect, and policing strategies based on gaming statistics, the inner city has literally become a graveyard for its lucklessly non-white inhabitants.

Each of *The Wire*'s Seasons has had a theme—the mirrored institutions of gangs and police hierarchies in season 1, the fate of Baltimore's troubled port and waterfront district in season 2, and the real-estate scams, urban-renewal boondoggles, and politically dubious redevelopment projects of season 3. In season 4, *The Wire* moves into the city's school system: the subtitle mocks George W. Bush's "No Child Left Behind" educational policy by offering "No Corner Left Behind" instead. The schools are, like the police force, another "system," one based on playing the numbers by rounding up phantom students twice per year for funding purposes and by abandoning even the semblance of education in order to prepare for bogus achievement tests required by the government. Focusing as it does on children, the show's theme song is redone by a Baltimore youth ensemble of amateur singers, DoMaJe.

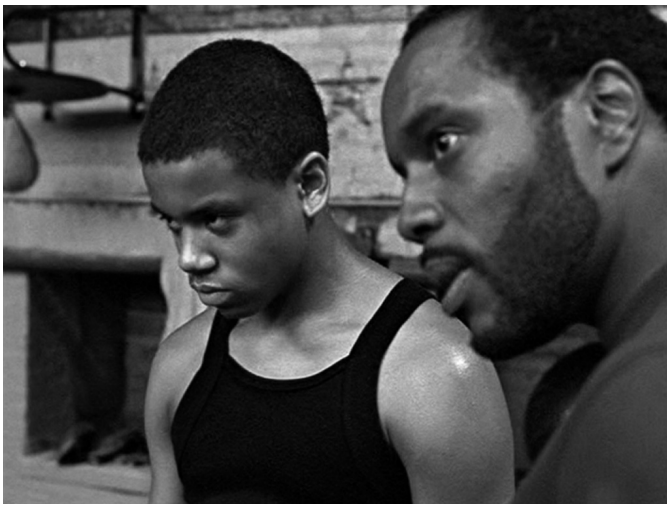
One of season 4's unlikely heroes is Roland "Prez" Pryzbylewski (Jim True Frost), known now as "Mr. Prezbo," a failed cop who has decided to retool as a math teacher. His bewildering experiences during the first few days of class stand in for the viewer's education in the reality of an inner-city school: Prez gets "good news" that a student stabbed in his class wasn't HIV+. Picking up threads from previous seasons, Prez's class includes Namond (Julito McCullum), the son of Wee-Bey Brice (Hassan Johnson), one of the key members of the Barksdale crew from season 1, currently serving time for murder. Namond is picked from Prez's class for a special program focused on at-risk youth, run by a University of Maryland researcher with the streetwise help of ex-cop Howard "Bunny" Colvin (Robert Wisdom), who in season 3 had tried to reduce crime in his command district by unoffi-

The city as character and cage. © 2007 Home Box Office

cially legalizing drugs and setting up a "Hamsterdam" (or mini-Amsterdam) in West Baltimore. Colvin's fostering of Namond—which counterpoints a number of disastrous mentoring experiences in the season—is an unexpected bright spot in a sea of tragedies, and typical of the show's care to depict real gestures of humanity amid the worst of situations. Prez's class also includes Namond's best friends: Michael Lee (Tristan Wilds), the victim of a sexually predatory stepfather; Randy Wagstaff (Maestro Harrell), a business-savvy refugee from a group home; and Duquan "Dukie" Weems (Jermaine Crawford), the bullied runt, whose addict family has been known to sell his clothes for drugs. The interlinked stories of these four troubled teens from the streets form the backbone of season 4.

In combination, Crawford, Harrell, McCullum, and Wilds, who were roughly the same 14–15 age range as the characters they portrayed during shooting, put together one of the most astonishing youth ensemble performances in television history. At *The Wire*, they operated under the mentorship of Robert F. Chew, who plays Proposition Joe Stuart in the series, but who also is an extraordinary acting coach. In his audio commentary on episode 1, Simon discusses the risk of putting the entire season on the shoulders of four teenagers, and the actors themselves put together a rambunctious commentary on episode 11 along with Chew. Like the show, the quartet went Emmy-less, and their discussion of the difficulties in getting quality parts as young African American actors (cameos in *ER* and *Law and Order* are mentioned) reminds the viewer that, among its other virtues, *The Wire* is a minority-dominated masterpiece. Characters in *The Wire* are not made black or white, gay or straight, cops or robbers, old or young to score points or create a message, they're those television rarities, fully-fledged human beings.

The group of young men is often shot together in breathtakingly shattered cityscapes, a cinematographic analog to a repeated quest on the part of several characters in the season to develop "soft eyes," a condition that allows one to see the big picture. These locations themselves—an overgrown play-



Michael and Cutty (Chad L. Coleman), Chris and Proposition Joe (Robert F. Chew). © 2007 Home Box Office

ground near a row of vacant houses, an abandoned industrial loading dock where kids gather, the drug corners, various Baltimore food joints, or just the streets themselves—are more than sets, they're characters in the series. An unusual emphasis on wide shots, in which groups of human figures merge with their environment, forms a key element of *The Wire's* philosophy, and makes an extra character of the city itself. The late Robert F. Colesberry, executive producer of *The Wire* and the Simon/Burns 2000 miniseries *The Corner*, spoke to Simon of a philosophy of "staying wide" and "showing the world."

Simon is unabashedly literary in his assertion that *The Wire* is essentially structured like "a novel." He also suggests that the moral universe of *The Wire* is most closely akin to Greek tragedy, but the series has a more epic quality, a contemporary version of *Crime and Punishment* without the inevitability of redemption. Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* and the school of American Naturalism, especially its pulp version in film noir, seem apropos. Characters spring traps on themselves because their environment offers them no real choices, and the unfolding of the plot entails the slow sealing of fates.

The truth is that re-watching the series on DVD entails an agonizing feeling of helplessness to alter the fates of these characters as they change from boys to men. Although he has a positive mentor in boxing coach and former Barksdale enforcer Dennis "Cutty" Wise (marvelously played by Chad L. Coleman, another *Wire* regular with "soft eyes"), Michael ultimately turns to Marlo, Chris, and Snoop to rid his family of its tormentor, entering a Faustian pact to become a drug dealer and killer himself in the process. Dukie, who had always relied on Michael as his protector, joins his friend on the corner, despite the best efforts of Mr. Prezbo to help him with his problems at school.

By far the most awful fate, however, is reserved for Randy, whose seemingly irrepressible smile, a flashing beacon of hope throughout the series, finally dies when his role as a school informant is revealed through a policeman's error, his foster mother's home is firebombed, and the system bounces him back into a group home. Namond's rescue by Colvin is made all the more surprising by his status as "least likely to succeed" and the son of a notorious gangster, but his safety remains provisional and the losses his friends suffer are staggering by comparison. Michael's step-by-step journey into the abyss and Namond's gradual reclamation feel utterly authentic and plausible, a streetwise version of an hourglass plot by Henry James.

Along with the deep immersion experience in the foreign language of inner-city schools, season 4 of *The Wire* dwells on all manner of fostering, learning, and education, from the hazing of rookie Homicide detective Shakima "Kima" Greggs (Sonja Sohn) to the desperate attempts of the young men to find safety in their fractured lives. Sometimes, as for Michael and Dukie, the mean streets are safer than their own homes. All four are homeless at one point or another in the season, finding real or figurative foster homes under the aegis of Marlo's gangsters, Mr. Prezbo's classroom, or Cutty's boxing gym. Even the local police station becomes a refuge: both Namond and Randy spend nights sleeping on a bench in the office of Ellis Carver (Seth Gilliam) because they have nowhere else to go. The group has a younger friend, Donut (Nathan Corbett), who gets his kicks stealing cars, and the ubiquitous black SUVs of the neighborhood gangsters begin to seem like dream homes, mobile operation centers of relative comfort, freedom, and power.

Season 4 continues a number of plot strands from previous seasons as well as encompassing another major storyline,

Growing up in Baltimore. © 2007 Home Box Office

the unfolding of the three-way Baltimore Democratic Party mayoral primary race between African American Mayor Clarence V. Royce (Glynn Turman), the white Carcetti, and African American Catholic candidate Tony Gray (Christopher Mann), whom Carcetti manipulated into launching a campaign so that the black vote would be divided. The season's early episodes count down, week by week, to the primary vote—Baltimore's drug dealers, meanwhile, offer an "election special" on their product. (An unseen voice calls out the shifting names of the drugs season after season; one term used in season 4, Plymouth Rock, recalls Malcolm X's comment that African Americans "didn't land on Plymouth Rock, Plymouth Rock landed on us.") The action then jumps ahead from Carcetti's primary victory to his mayoral tenure, the joke being that the actual election, in which Republican candidates have no chance, is a foregone conclusion. Carcetti is a conflicted operator who oozes in public, deeply and sincerely loves his family, and has managed to convince the Baltimore Police Department and the leaders of the African American community that he actually cares about change. Season 4 ends, like previous seasons, without definitive resolutions. Mayor Carcetti has demonstrated a distressing but inevitable concern for his own political future that may outweigh his goodwill. The Major Crimes Unit that has featured in every season has been reconstituted once again by Cedric Daniels (Lance Reddick) and Lester Freamon (Clarke Peters), this time to tackle Marlo.

The biggest running joke for the producers, actors, writers, and crew of *The Wire*, emphasized so often that it obviously forms a point of pride, is the show's own "failure." Through four seasons it has garnered not a single Emmy, although it has gathered a mountain of accolades from the AFI, the Edgar Awards, ASCAP, the NAACP, and the American Television Critics Association. The relentless superlatives critics throw into print every year—*The Wire* is the best crime drama currently on television, and possibly the best thing that has *ever* been broadcast in television history, etc.—as yet have not stuck. In fact, the critical blurbs almost

appear to exist in an inverse relationship to the show's popularity. There is a growing cult around *The Wire*, although many of its members do not subscribe to HBO, appearing instead like junkies at their local video rental stores months after the original broadcasts, and helping the show continue its extraordinary afterlife.

The series is a serious work of fiction, nearly fifty hours and counting of pitch-perfect high pulp in the great American tradition of the literary detective genre and its masters: James M. Cain, Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Patricia Highsmith, and Jim Thompson. In fact, for all its praiseworthy emphasis on authenticity and gritty realism, *The Wire* is actually based upon an ingenious and carefully orchestrated plot structure. Its regular episode writers include contemporary detective novelists like George Pelecanos, Dennis Lehane, and Richard Price, and the writers, even Burns and Simon, have filled the series with the witty and the convincingly implausible (notably a crime-scene investigation using only the word "fuck" and its variants) as much as sponge-like reportage and muckraking. The directors used in the series have included the Polish New Wave director Agnieszka Holland. Spike Lee's superb 1995 film adaptation of Price's novel *Clockers*, along with happenings and themes of *Homicide*, may be the most obvious cinematic precursors to *The Wire*. Like *Clockers*, the series is also a contemporary adaptation of the classic conventions of the gangster genre to the grim realities of the African American experience in the inner cities of America after the collapse of the Welfare State and the failure of the War on Drugs.

Ultimately, the much-touted failure of *The Wire*—the sort of failure one hopes to see repeated—has something to do with its politics. As Crawford, McCullum, Harrell, Wilds, and Chew discuss in their commentary on episode 11, the series deals in "things nobody wants to deal with." Simon is up-front about his disappointment and anger with the priorities of his culture. *The Wire* is in the business of telling America truths about itself that would be unbearable even if it were interested in bearing them. These truths have to do with what Michael Harrington, in his heartbreaking 1962 study of poverty in the United States, called "The Other America." There, Harrington had written of the ruinous post-WWII policies of "urban renewal" that stripped the centers of cities like Baltimore, subsidized white flight to the suburbs, and created free-fire zones of the remaining slums. Confronting this other America in the style of *The Wire* involves recording facts on the ground and making the fiction fit reality with the greatest authenticity: real morgues, Baltimore casting, ingenious ex-cop and ex-con actors, and locations scouted up to the point of their demolition. In cities like Baltimore, reportage, description, or documentation of what Harrington called America's "lost" people—its invisible, ignored, or internally displaced non-white urban populations—becomes a mode of social critique. The show's implicit argument condemns a criminally negligent and culturally pervasive *failure to notice*. (Given all this, and Simon's former job as a crime reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*, it comes as little surprise that the theme of *The Wire*'s fifth and final season, which began its run on HBO in January, is the media, and specifically Simon's alma mater.)

Hollywood's usual liberal social critique of racial injustice—for example, the Academy Awards selection of Best Picture for 2006, *Crash*—typically offers its characters paths to redemption and parables of personal choice that rarely exist in reality. The main point is to help its audience digest its dinner. *The Wire* is far more radical in the sense that it finds these lies themselves—about individuals who overcome the odds—pernicious and unacceptable. (In Hollywood, we would only see Namond's reclamation story; in *The Wire*, Namond is seen as a brilliant and unlikely exception to the rules of the game, in which institutions crush individuals.) *The Wire* is, at its core, a critique of America itself and of American ideals, of the notion that things are always improving, of the inevitability of progress through can-do attitudes, self-help slogans, and elbow grease, of the concept of better living through statistics, of the national self-hypnotizing salesmanship philosophy that "things are getting better every day in every way." The series finale in 2008 is set up by season 4 to investigate whether large-scale change is even possible in Baltimore under a more well-meaning regime. In theory, a buyer could purchase and enjoy this no-frills DVD boxed set by itself—the enclosed extras like the commentaries and two half-hour-long promotional films are for diehards only—there's enough exposition to catch up with the plot, although many nuances from earlier seasons would be missed. In practice, the thing to do is clear a month off your schedule, watch or re-watch the whole series front to back from the beginning, and get uncomfortable.

J. M. TYREE is a Truman Capote Fellow in Fiction at Stanford University's Wallace Stegner Fellowship Program in Creative Writing.

ABSTRACT An essay on the fourth season DVD boxed set of the politically uncompromising HBO series, *The Wire* (created by Ed Burns and David Simon), an urban crime drama of unprecedented complexity that is unusual in featuring a cast largely composed of African Americans.

KEYWORDS David Simon, Ed Burns, Baltimore, African Americans, television drama, HBO

DVD DATA *The Wire: The Complete Fourth Season.* Various directors. © 2007 Home Box Office, Inc. Publisher: HBO Video, 2007. $59.99, 4 discs.

FILM CULTURE IN ROME

DAVID FORGACS VISITS ROMAN EDUCATION, EXHIBITION, AND PRODUCTION FACILITIES

Rome in early October 2007 is warm. Tourists go about in T-shirts and the city's two hundred churches stand cut out against clear blue skies. By a stroke of bad luck, the start of the Rome FilmFest on 18 October coincided with a cold front coming down from the north. At the main festival venue, the Auditorium Parco della Musica in the Flaminio district, dancers in short skirts were doing an open-air promotion for the animated feature *Winx Club: The Secret of the Lost Kingdom*. They twirled in front of a small shivering audience with the three concert halls designed by Renzo Piano hunched behind like huge armadillos. Reese Witherspoon arrived with Jake Gyllenhaal to promote *Rendition*, smiling bravely for the cameras in a thin burgundy dress. Francis Ford Coppola and Tim Roth attended for the world premiere of *Youth Without Youth* and Shekhar Kapur, Cate Blanchett, and Geoffrey Rush launched *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. The official godmother of the festival was Sophia Loren, now seventy-three, who received a special acting award.

When the Rome FilmFest (whose Italian name is Cinema: Festa Internazionale di Roma) ran for the first time in 2006 there were criticisms in the Italian press about it crowding out an already full international film festival timetable—it overlaps with London—and being an upstart rival to Venice, whose film festival takes place in August and September and was first held in 1932. Its launch was interpreted as a further move by Rome's ambitious mayor, Walter Veltroni, now a strong contender to be Italy's next prime minister, to promote himself and the city. Yet, although Veltroni may have been behind the FilmFest, he does not choose its program. That is the task of the organizers, and they do not appear to be trying to copy or compete with other festivals, whether longstanding prize-giving ones like Venice, Cannes, or Berlin or the small specialized ones, of which there are nearly forty in Italy alone, including Rome's own Independent Film Festival, RIFF, which has run since 2002, and important heritage and restoration events like the Pordenone Silent Film Festival and the more recent Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna.

The Rome FilmFest has at least two characteristics that make it distinctive. First, its prize section is deliberately low-key and different. The international films in competition are for the most part both independent and popularly accessible and they are voted for by a "people's jury," whose president in 2007 was Bosnian director Danis Tanović. The jury is made up of fifty ordinary citizens, thirty chosen in Italy, the rest from other European countries. They awarded Best Film to *Juno*, Canadian director Jason Reitman's bittersweet film about a teenage pregnancy, and a special jury prize to *Hafez* by Iranian director Abolfazl Jalili. Alongside the main competition there is a parallel one called Alice in the City, open to films for or about children, with an award co-sponsored by UNICEF. Second, the organizers want the festival to involve the inhabitants of Rome and they try to implant it around the city, for instance by setting up open-air screens in working-class neighborhoods to project archive footage and photos. Rome's population is over 2.5 million, nearly ten times more than Venice's, and the event can therefore draw, like the larger metropolitan festivals elsewhere in the world, on a substantial local audience that wants to see interesting films at affordable prices. Most tickets cost between three and seven euros and some screenings are free. Jonathan Demme's *New Home Movies from the Lower 9th Ward*, which tracks the inhabitants of the most devastated black suburb of New Orleans in the two years following the Hurricane Katrina floods, was shown for free with projected Italian subtitles to a nearly full house at eleven o'clock on a Monday morning.

Behind the overt reasons for the press criticisms of the FilmFest there were also, probably, more latent anxieties. Other Italian cities see Rome as already having the largest slice of the cinema cake. They therefore feel it is greedy to want a major film festival too. Other cities—notably Turin

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Aerial view of the set of *Gangs of New York*, showing the water tank and bluescreen. Photo: CCS

and Milan—were important production centers in the silent era, but from the early 1930s most of Italy's film resources came to be concentrated in Rome. It was less industrialized than the northern cities and less well connected to northern Europe, but the Fascist regime then in power wanted to centralize the communications industries in the capital. The prestigious film school, the Scuola Nazionale di Cinema, part of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (CSC), was founded in 1935 and has been at its present location on the Via Tuscolana since 1940. Cinecittà, the large studio complex nearby, opened in 1937. The launch of the film festival in Venice was an exception to this centripetal trend, but the festival was an extension of the existing art Biennale, which had been running since 1895 and had already accumulated great international prestige.

After World War II and the subsequent reconstruction, Rome's dominant position was further consolidated, not least because Italy's post-war governments continued the policy of centralization and held back moves for regional devolution till 1970. In 1951 the capital had six active film studios with a total of twenty-nine sound stages, compared to just one studio each in Milan, Turin, Venice, Tirrenia, and Palermo. Cinecittà alone had eleven functioning stages, including the largest in Europe, Stage 5. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer commandeered virtually the whole of Cinecittà for nearly eighteen months in 1950–51 to make *Quo Vadis*. They gave a speaking part to just one Italian actor, Marina Berti (who was in any case half-English and bilingual), and they prevented members of Communist unions from working on the film, but in return they upgraded the studio for Technicolor and installed air conditioning. Most of Italy's major post-war directors, screenwriters, actors, and technicians moved to Rome if they were not already based there.

Since the late 1980s this centralizing tendency has been partially reversed. Distinctive filmmaking cultures have reemerged in other Italian cities: Naples, with the so-called "new Neapolitan cinema" of Mario Martone, Antonio Capuano, and others, including recently Paolo Sorrentino, writer and director of *The Consequences of Love* (2004); Palermo, with the weird and brilliant comic-satiric films of Daniele Ciprì and Franco Maresco; Milan, the base of Silvio Soldini, director of *Bread and Tulips* (2000), and his production company Monogatari; Turin, where director Daniele Segre set up a small production company and in 1989 a

School of Social Documentation, designed to train young filmmakers in a committed approach to documentary. Turin is also the home of the National Cinema Museum, which since 2000 has been rehoused in the nineteenth-century Mole Antonelliana with a glass elevator flying up inside its dome, and the Turin Film Festival, which has run every November since 1982. But Rome remains the city through which most filmmakers pass for television work, or to train or teach, and there is still a substantial concentration there of directors, including actor–directors, belonging to the generation born between 1950 and 1970. They include Nanni Moretti, Francesca Archibugi, Cristina Comencini, Francesca Comencini, Carlo Verdone, Maurizio Sciarra, Eugenio Cappuccio, and Sabina Guzzanti.

Rome also has the highest concentration of film business in Italy. There are independent companies like Fandango and Nanni Moretti's Sacher Film, which do both production and distribution, and Lucky Red, mainly distribution. There is Rainbow, the animation studio headed by Iginio Straffi, that makes *Winx Club*, already an international hit series on various children's television channels. Two of the big commercial producers and distribution companies of the 1990s, Cecchi Gori and Silvio Berlusconi's Medusa, have offices in Rome. Medusa is still active, despite accusations against Berlusconi that he cooked the books when he bought it in 1995 (these were dropped because of insufficient evidence), whereas Cecchi Gori had its assets frozen in 2002 after allegations that it had used funds from its football club Fiorentina to pay off debts on its film business. Rome is also the home of Italy's two most important semi-public producers and distributors, Istituto Luce and Rai Cinema. The former was founded in 1924 under the Fascist government to make newsreels and non-fiction subjects. It is now part of the Cinecittà Holding group and gets funding from the Culture Ministry, the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, to finance and distribute films of quality. Rai, Italy's broadcasting network, has been producing and distributing feature films since 1970. Rai Cinema was created in 2000 as its new film arm with three branches: purchases, production, and distribution. Among the films it has co-produced are Marco Tullio Giordana's anti-mafia *The Hundred Steps* (2000), Gianni Amelio's *The Keys to the House* (2004), and Emanuele Crialese's 2007 *Golden Door* (*Nuovomondo*). It also co-produces films by foreign directors, including Samirah Makhmalbaf's *Blackboards* (2000) and Spike Lee's *Miracle at St Anna*, about black American soldiers in World War II in a Tuscan village where a Nazi massacre took place. This is currently in production at Cinecittà.

When it opened seventy years ago, Cinecittà was surrounded by open country and connected by a tram route to the city center six miles away. Its architect, Gino Peressuti, had toured other European production facilities and looked at plans of various Hollywood studios to ensure that it would be in the vanguard of international film production. Since 1980 the tram has been replaced by a metro line, the Linea A, the Tuscolana is now one of the city's busiest arterial roads and Cinecittà's backlot is overlooked by apartment blocks. Parties of schoolchildren frequently pour out of the metro station to visit. The studio today epitomizes the Rome film world's split between nostalgic attachment to its cinematic heritage, and desire to move on and live in the present. Cinecittà is steeped in its own history and ritualizes its memories. When Federico Fellini died in 1993 his coffin was laid out in a darkened Stage 5, where he had done most of his studio work from *La dolce vita* (1960) onward. It was guarded by carabinieri, with a single light beamed onto it, as visitors filed past to pay respects and sign the book. The office and mini-apartment that Fellini used to work and sleep in over Stage 5 has been reconstructed on ground level and preserved as a kind of shrine, complete with his desk and the colored felt-tip pens he used to draw characters, ideas for films, and accounts of his dreams for his Jungian analyst. Enlarged pages from the dream books were displayed at an exhibition at the 2007 FilmFest.

But Cinecittà is also an active and productive film studio. Non-Italian films shot there since 2000 include *Gangs of New York* (2002), *Ripley's Game* (2002), *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), *Exorcist: The Beginning* (2004), *Mission: Impossible III* (2006), *Go Go Tales* (2007) and *Silk* (2007). It gets chosen because of its size—it now has twenty-two sound stages and a twenty-five-acre backlot—and the quality of its facilities, which include an on-site sculpture studio, carpentry workshop, the processing lab (which also does film restoration work), and a recently opened digital front-end and post-production facility, Cinecittà Digital. Catherine Lowing, who works in the studio's International Relations department, shows me round the backlot. We walk past what is still standing of Dante Ferretti's set for *Gangs of New York* and get lost in the labyrinthine back streets of ancient Rome for the HBO–BBC series *Rome*, which finished shooting in 2007. A fire in August destroyed part of the set depicting Roman slums. Men in white protective suits and masks come to pick through the debris. Behind the huge water tank, now empty, stands an enormous bluescreen. When *Gangs of New York* was in production two full-scale ships were moored there, seen in the film against mattes of New York harbor and the skyline.

From Cinecittà I go down the road to the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. Franca Farina, senior film

Clockwise from top left: outside the bookstore at the 2007 Rome FilmFest. The exterior of stage 5 at Cinecittà. Piero Tosi (left) and Andrea Crisanti with students of costume design at the Scuola Nazionale di Cinema, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. Entrance to the Cinema Moderno, Rome's oldest purpose-built cinema, under the arcade in Piazza della Repubblica. Open-air screen at the Casa del Cinema, Villa Borghese. Positive prints of *Salvatore Giuliano* (Francesco Rosi, 1962) in the Cineteca Nazionale. Photos: David Forgacs

restorer at the Cineteca Nazionale, takes me down to the temperature-controlled underground vaults where one copy of every Italian film has to be deposited by law. She was responsible for the restoration of *Rome Open City* (1945), screened at the 2006 FilmFest, and she also restored *Marriage Italian Style* (1965), shown this year as part of the Sophia Loren retrospective. In the coffee bar the film school students are taking a break between classes. The school offers nine courses, all of which run for three years, in directing, production, screenwriting, acting, photography, set and costume design (students must choose one or the other after the first year), editing, sound, animation. All courses have tough selection procedures and strictly controlled quotas of places —six a year in most cases. Astrid Meloni and Marco Casini are starting the second year of the acting course and are both enthusiastic. Astrid is a psychology graduate, Marco came straight from high school. In addition to the guest directors and screenwriters who run masterclasses, the permanent staff include some of the great names of Italian cinema. Giuseppe Rotunno and Piero Tosi, both now in their eighties, respectively head up photography and costume design. Rotunno was DP on films including Luchino Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers* (1960) and *The Leopard* (1963), Fellini's *Amarcord* (1973) and *Casanova* (1976), and Bob Fosse's *All That Jazz* (1979). Tosi designed the costumes for most of Visconti's films. Production design is taught by Andrea Crisanti, whose credits include Andrei Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia* (1983), Michelangelo Antonioni's *Identification of a Woman* (1982), and Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* (1988). At the end of each year students from all the courses work together on short film projects, culminating in a graduation film.

However, the Scuola Nazionale di Cinema has been in a deep crisis since the beginning of 2005 when public funding for cinema and film training was cut back by the Berlusconi government. In October 2006 a group of students at the school wrote an open letter to the CSC's president, Francesco Alberoni, complaining that its courses were underfunded, inadequately taught, and old-fashioned (with the exception of the acting course), that the filming and editing facilities were out of date (the digital video cameras they are given to shoot with outside are, for instance, old Sony PD50s) and they were not given adequate support by the CSC to screen or publicize their work. Clearly, the policy of entrusting courses to an older generation of experts also cuts two ways. The experts are a transmission belt of knowledge and skills to the young (Maria Cecilia Cafiero, a third-year student of costume design, says it is wonderful to be taught by Piero Tosi), but some of the students complain that their teachers are out of touch with their aspirations and with the new cinema.

The Casa del Cinema is a great place to have morning coffee. You look out over the green slopes of the Villa Borghese park away from the traffic-choked streets below. Since it opened in 2004 it has become one of Rome's most attractive screening spaces, with two indoor auditoriums and an open-air screen as well as a conference venue and film study center. You can browse the bookstore in the afternoon and view DVDs from their collection for free between 4 and 8 P.M. (except Mondays). Or you can go down to the Caffè Fandango in Piazza di Pietra, near Piazza Colonna. Run by Fandango, the independent producer–distributor, as well as being a bookstore and café it hosts discussions and has a small screening space at the back. In recent years alternative cinema venues have enjoyed a renewed popularity in Rome. There are ones that have been running for years, like the Filmstudio, which opened in 1967 but was then exiled into various different premises before returning to its original home in Trastevere, and Nanni Moretti's Nuovo Sacher, also in Trastevere. There is the Politecnico Fandango in the Flaminio district, the Alphaville in Pigneto, Il Labirinto and the Azzurro Scipioni in Prati, the Detour in Monti, and the Cinema Trevi, which is the public screening venue of the CSC. The Trevi is tucked away in a backstreet near the Trevi Fountain. Its below-ground auditorium sits next to the remains of a Roman building, discovered when the site was being excavated for the cinema. Several of these cine-clubs ran fringe programs this year as part of the FilmFest. In fall 2007 on the Filmstudio's two screens, you could see a Jean Rouch mini-season and a Spanish cinema season. Il Labirinto was running a season on the cinema of migration. The Politecnico Fandango showed in October, among other films, the 2006 documentary *Bil'in My Love* (*Bil'in Habibti*) by Shai Carmeli Pollak, about a Palestinian village that has resisted repeated harassment by Israeli soldiers, with the director and two of the villagers present. And the Trevi runs well-programmed retrospectives and international seasons as well as showcasing the short films made by Scuola Nazionale di Cinema students. In the new cinema of the recently refurbished Palazzo delle Esposizioni there were screenings of films by Stanley Kubrick as part of a major Kubrick exhibition.

Rome overall has over sixty active screening venues, including commercial cinemas and film clubs, and about 250 screens. They include some of the city's historic theaters, like the Adriano in Piazza Cavour, built in 1888, now a ten-screen cinema, as well as surviving 1930s picture palaces like the Barberini, in Piazza Barberini, which was once owned by Roberto Rossellini's father, as was the Cinema Etoile (formerly Cinema Corso) off the Via del Corso. There are smaller venues like the Nuovo Olimpia, also off the Via del

Corso, which screens films in English with Italian subtitles, the Mignon near Piazza Fiume, and the Tibur in San Lorenzo, built on the corner of the vast church of the Immacolata and until the 1980s a parish cinema. In Piazza della Repubblica is the Moderno, the city's oldest purpose-built cinema. It opened in 1904, when the square was known as Piazza Esedra. Its original owner was Filoteo Alberini, one of the pioneers of Italian film production and distribution. In 1907 it was upgraded: the ceilings in the auditorium were decorated with frescoes, those of the foyer with checkerboard stucco bas-reliefs. Over the last quarter-century the Moderno has shared the fate of many old cinemas. In the early 1980s, when cinema audiences were at their lowest ebb, it became a two-screen porn house. Then in the 1990s it became a Warner Village multiplex and the property next door became a McDonalds. The 1907 ceiling is still visible in the entrance hall, as is part of the fresco, in what is now screen 4.

Another historic cinema that has recently reopened is the Apollo, near Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, in the Esquilino district. This area, just south of the central Stazione Termini, was built up in the late nineteenth century, after Rome became the capital (1871), to house the employees of the ministries and other public services. The Apollo dates from the early twentieth century. Like the Moderno, it was hit by the crisis of theatrical film exhibition in the late 1970s and it too was turned into a red-light cinema, the Pussycat, before closing its doors. There were plans to reopen it as a bingo hall (the fate that has befallen another historic cinema, the Palazzo in nearby San Lorenzo, built in 1929), but these were thwarted when a group of citizens campaigned and intervened to get the Apollo turned into a cultural center, for music, arts, and film screenings. Piazza Vittorio and its surrounding streets have become, since the early 1990s, a multiethnic mosaic, and the nationalities who live and work there include Chinese, Indian, Bangladeshi, Ecuadorian, Peruvian. The story of the campaign, led by the indefatigable musician Mario Tronco, to create an association called Apollo 11 to save and repurpose the Apollo, and to recruit a multicultural orchestra to play there, is recounted in Agostino Ferrente's heart-warming documentary *L'orchestra di Piazza Vittorio*, released in 2006 and since screened at festivals around the world. For a view of today's Rome and the vibrant world of its alternative cultural spaces, there is no better place to start than this film.

DAVID FORGACS is Research Professor in Modern Studies at the British School at Rome.

ABSTRACT This essay describes a number of facilities and institutions in Rome, including the film festival, film school, exhibition circuit, and key production center Cinecittà.

KEYWORDS Italian cinema, Rome, film culture, film festivals, film facilities

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PARIS NOUS APPARTIENT: *FLÂNERIE* IN PARIS AND FILM

BRIGITTE ROLLET SURVEYS ONE OF THE QUINTESSENTIAL CINEMATIC CITIES

"Paris, ville lumière." Although the pun is untranslatable, it would be tempting to rephrase the cliché (in the literal and metaphorical meaning of the word) and use the plural instead of the singular. Ville lumière ("city of light") maybe, but Paris might just as well be nicknamed "Ville des Lumière," from the name of the two brothers, Auguste and Louis, who, according to the French historiography of the medium, invented the cinema in 1895. Born in Lyons in 1862 and 1864 respectively, the Lumière brothers created the first moving images of Paris in the *fin de siècle* and contributed to the emergence of France's main city as a capital of cinema *par excellence*. Paris is where a "film house" first opened, also in December 1895—or at least a prototype of such a venue: the first public screening of the Lumières' reels took place in the basement of the Grand Café on the Boulevard des Capucines. The cinematic importance of the French capital was demonstrated twenty years ago in the superb *Cité-Ciné* exhibition devoted to the links between film and urban spaces, which took place in the Parisian quarter of La Villette. Paris is one of the most "cinegenic" cities in the world and if anyone were to doubt that designation, they might visit the Forum des Images (formerly known as Vidéothèque de Paris), established in 1988, which makes available thousands of fiction and documentary films (6600, to be precise), whose only common denominator is the fact that they include shots of Paris and the Paris region. It attracts a wide-ranging audience, from film lovers to researchers, ordinary visitors to specialists, in a top-of-the-range auditorium with individual screening spaces allowing audiences to order and watch films at a low price.

The presence of cinema in Paris is overwhelming, from filmic images to the visual inscription of cinema in the buildings themselves, from the posters on the Colonnes Morris to the diverse architectural features of its film houses. There is at least one cinema in each of the twenty Parisian districts, from the shabby art houses on the left bank with one or two auditoria showing up to twenty pictures a week, to the brand-new Ciné-Cité near Bercy, which has become the new center for cinema, with about the same number of films but with an equivalent number of auditoria. Although many places devoted to cinema have closed since my time as a student in the Latin Quarter around twenty-five years ago (when it was still possible for a film addict as I was at the time to see a different film every day of the week for weeks on end), there are probably more film houses per capita than in any other capital city. What has not changed though is the choice available. In Paris in the 1980s, I discovered films from all over the world and more especially from the East Asia, long before they became more exportable, fashionable, and part of what is now called "world cinema." The variety is still amazing today. In one week of August 2007, as I wrote this piece, I counted over 200 different films screening, a total which does not encompass the programmes of the Cinémathèque Française. Nor does this total include festival films, and the number of festivals hosted in Paris and surrounding suburbs is extremely high, with unusually varied content. In the "gender and sexuality" category, there is the Festival de Films de Femmes de Créteil, founded under another name in 1979, the lesbian festival Cinnéfables (1989), and the Festival de Films Gays et Lesbiens de Paris (1994). Other festivals include the Festival du Film de Paris (2005) or the more recently created Paris Cinema, which is really a marketing event for commercial brands that want to trade on Parisian chic.

Long before Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Amélie* (2001) exported a fantasized and phantasmagorical Paris all over the world, more realistic images of Paris had traveled back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean and beyond. It is no coincidence that the two pictures which indelibly marked the Cannes

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***Stolen Kisses*: the shut-up Cinémathèque Française (top). *Hate*: Paris from another point of view.** Top: © 1968 Les Films du Carrosse; DVD: 2 entertain Video (U.K.). Bottom: © 1995 Productions Lazennec, Sept Cinéma, Studio Canal+; DVD: Optimum Releasing (U.K.).

film festival of 1959 and French cinema as a whole, *The 400 Blows* and *Breathless*, used Paris as a natural setting in an innovative fashion that many other directors have subsequently followed. Both François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard exploited the city as an open-air studio. It must not be forgotten here that among the innovations introduced by the young Turks of the New Wave, the refusal of studio reconstruction and the use of location shooting were major features. Before them, filmmakers from the classical era, Marcel Carné (*Hôtel du Nord* [1938]), René Clair (*Under the Roofs of Paris* [1930]) or Jean Renoir (from *Boudu Saved from Drowning* [1932] to *The Crime of Monsieur Lange* [1936]), to name but a few, had added documentary footage to studio reconstructions of Paris, sometimes shot in an almost documentary fashion, as did Jean Vigo in *L'Atalante* (1934).

It is interesting to see how different movements and genres within French cinema represented Paris, in the process somehow always offering a different city: the silent Paris of Feuillade and his vampires, the Paris of the *réalisme poétique* of Carné and Clair in the 1930s, the belle époque Paris of Renoir and Jacqueline Audry in the post-war period, the New Wave Paris of Truffaut, Godard, and Agnès Varda, the postmodern Paris of Jean-Jacques Beineix, Leos Carax, or the early Luc Besson, not to mention the peripheral *banlieue* settings of Mathieu Kassovitz's *Hate* (*La Haine* [1995]) and most *beur* films. In black-and-white or in color, the visual, narrative, and symbolic constructions of the city offered in all these films illustrate the multifaceted and fantasized dimensions of modern Paris. Each director brings a different attitude to the city and discloses something new. And it is by no means just the business of locals to reimagine Paris. A recent survey by the Paris mayor's office recorded that over 700 films are shot in the city every year, bringing economic benefit as well as new perspectives.

Paris is home to the major French cinema institutions: the old and the new Cinémathèque Française, the Centre National du Cinéma (CNC), as well as legendary theaters such as the Rex and the Max Linder on the Grands Boulevards of the right bank, or in a different style and on a different bank, the Pagode, a unique and amazing cinema constructed as its name suggests in the form of a pagoda, in the traditionally venerable and posh seventh district. As for the Cinémathèque, it is monumentally important for French filmmaking: its programming has inspired generations of cinephiles (see for example, the opening shot of Truffaut's *Stolen Kisses*, made in 1968, which shows the entrance to

the building that was closed down because of the May events). The recent move of the Cinémathèque and the Bibliothèque du Film (BIFI) to a site near Bercy, on the right bank of the Seine, has contributed to the enhanced profile of an area which seems now devoted specifically to film (being the site also of the Ciné-Cité multiplex mentioned above). Situated just opposite the new Bibliothèque Nationale du France (BNF) on the left bank, this district is linked to the other side of the river by a footbridge named after Simone de Beauvoir, symbolizing therefore the intersection of high and mass culture. Cinema in France is the "Seventh Art" and everything is done to defend and support it. For example, at the 1993 round of GATT negotiations, France insisted on exempting cultural products from the agreement, on the official grounds that "culture is not just another commodity."

Continuously since the end of World War II (the CNC was founded in 1946), the French state has protected the film industry through the subsidy of training, production, and exhibition. The cinema audience is also protected. There are regulations that prohibit the television screening of films at times when cinema attendance peaks. I remember the slogan used some twenty years ago, during a campaign to promote film in cinema-house (and not on television) which showed a spectacular film being programmed on a tiny TV set with a voiceover stating: "le cinéma c'est mieux au cinéma" (cinema is better in cinemas). Support for production has taken different forms: the New Wave would not have emerged without the *avance sur recettes* (advance on takings) created in 1959 which gave financial help to early-career film directors (during the 1959–62 golden age of the New Wave more than 125 first films were made). Today, there are still around sixty first films released annually. A *flâneur* in Paris today will see posters, even in multiplexes, advertising a large number of French films and not just Hollywood blockbusters as in many other capitals in the world. There is another sort of cinema complex just next to the BNF which combines the range and variety of films typical of this type of film house, with mostly art-house programming. The MK2 Bibliothèque (from the name of its founder, Martin Karmitz), former 1960s political filmmaker, is one of nine MK2 film houses in Paris, including two former industrial buildings turned into film houses in the nineteenth district, one on each side of the Bassin de la Villette which follows the path of the canal Saint-Martin as it flows north. This is recognizably cinematic territory, but its associations are various. Cinephiles will always associate the canal with *Hôtel du Nord* and its famous conversation between Arletty and Louis Jouvet ("atmosphère, atmosphère"), while others may remember Amélie Poulain skimming pebbles. Similarly, the setting of *Breathless* has been reimagined in Hervé Talud's *Un indien dans la ville* (1994); and the same is true of the Sacré-Coeur and Montmartre, linked for many with *The 400 Blows*, but more recently on view in *Louise (Take 2)* (1998).

Paris has traditionally been seen through the eyes of men (directors and characters), until the* flâneur *became a* flâneuse *and women created their own images, their own female characters who take over the city and sometimes tell a different story.

As well as altering audiences' cinematic memories of Paris, *Amélie* presents a gendered vision of the city. Women in Paris films are often just accessories, part of the scenery. "Paris est une blonde," sang Mistinguett and the myth of the "femme légère," the "loose woman," is probably stronger in Paris than in the provinces, while prostitutes are a regular part of the background. Women in the filmed streets of Paris—especially when they come from a provincial town like the heroine of *L'Atalante* and hundreds of others—are often threatened by the predatory urban male seducer: non-domestic spaces are not places for decent women. Paris has its dark side, not only for women but also for other dominated groups (ethnic and sexual "others") regularly confronted with verbal and physical violence. Despite being seen as the place where straight and often white lovers meet, Paris has traditionally been seen through the eyes of men (directors and characters), until the *flâneur* became a *flâneuse* and women created their own images, their own female characters who take over the city and sometimes tell a different story. The history of women's filmmaking in France is another French exception as the country has the highest percentage of women directors in the world. Most of them choose to make culturally prestigious "auteur films" and genre hybrids rather than commercial cinema.

Long before the 1970s witnessed the emergence of female directors in larger numbers, Jacqueline Audry, almost the only woman director of the Fourth Republic (1944–58), made belle époque films where her female characters defied the sexual norms of the time and transgressed the gender roles of post-war France. The Eiffel Tower in her costume dramas set in *fin de siècle* Paris recurrently appears as a work in progress, surrounded by a relatively untamed nature which is hard to visualize more than a century later. It is tempting to associate the modernity of the building with the moral evolution implicitly defended by Audry in her films. In a differ-

Views of the canal Saint-Martin. *Hotel du Nord*: city of despair; "atmosphère, atmosphère." *Amélie*: skimming stones; between two banks on the Pont des Arts. *2 Days in Paris*: arguing at the waterside. Top: © 1938 Impérial Film, SEDIF. DVD: Soda Pictures (U.K.). Middle: © 2001 Victoires Productions, Tapioca Films, France 3 Cinéma. DVD: Momentum Pictures (U.K.). Bottom: © 2006 Tempête Sous un Crâne Productions, 3L Filmproduktion GmbH. DVD: The Works (U.K.).

ent style, other female directors offered their heroines *flânerie* with strong social and sexual symbolic connotations. Agnès Varda in *Cleo from 5 to 7* (1961) created a sort of urban road movie in Paris, taking her eponymous heroine from one bank to the other, from the rue de Rivoli to the Parc Montsouris, using various forms of transport. Cleo's journeys, like those in most road movies, parallel her mental transformation and her existential voyage from spoiled popular singer to a more confident and autonomous woman. Two decades later, another woman director proposed a different sort of trajectory: Virginie Thévenet's *La Nuit porte jaretelles* (1985) has a female protagonist inhabiting a nocturnal Paris of sexual discovery, from the Bois de Boulogne and its transvestites, to the red-light district of Saint Denis with its peep shows and porn cinemas. The film echoes Marie-Claude Threilhou's *Simone Barbès ou la vertu* (1980), in which the eponymous heroine, an usherette in a porn theater, takes the audience to various alternative places in Paris, alone and at night. Both characters seem to "own the pavement" and they have their own views of the city. Rather than being spectacular entertainment for men (in the streets, on porn screens, or on the stages of the many cabaret bars that appear in these films) or an

Reclaiming the streets in two films by Claire Denis: *I Can't Sleep* (top) and *Friday Night*.

Top: © 1994 Arena Films, Orsans Productions, Les Films de Mindif, France 3 Cinéma, M6 Films, Agora Films S.A., Vega Film Productions; DVD: Wellspring Media (U.S.). Bottom: © 2002 Aréna Films, France 2 Cinéma. DVD: Tartan Video (U.K.).

object of their voyeuristic gaze, these two women become the watchers and invite the audience to literally follow their steps and their eyes (which in a sense Cleo had already encouraged us to do in Varda's film). Similarly, Juliette Berto's controversial *Neige* (1981), set in Pigalle, constructs a Paris by night quite different from a tourist sightseeing tour of the capital. Her heroine, a waitress in a bar, becomes involved in underground activities where appearances are deceptive. The way women directors represent Paris at night—other examples are Claire Denis's *I Can't Sleep* (1994) and Chantal Akerman's *Night and Day* (1991)—is transgressive in representing women who are often alone on the night-time street. All these films also introduce all sorts of "others" (male and female prostitutes, ethnic minorities) who often share women's oppression and can also be victims of/in the Parisian nocturnal streets. Belonging to a dominated group can contribute to explaining the concern some female directors express regarding discrimination and violence, be it social, sexual or ethnic.

I have not checked precisely whether and how Paris-set films by women differ from those of their male counterparts, but my impression is that they often eschew the romanticized or idealized vision of the city which is almost compulsory in Hollywood films set in Paris (and not just commercial cinema, if one remembers Woody Allen's *Everybody Says I Love You* [2000]) and which French male directors do not always avoid. Unlike the Paris traditionally seen (albeit more by foreigners than by French directors) as the ideal setting for romance in films, with a focus generally on the male characters' quest for a partner, love is not necessarily and primarily what female characters in French films set in Paris made by women are looking for in the city. Maybe it has to do with women's will to repossess public space after May '68. When female characters created by women directors find love or just sex, we do not tend to be dealing with romantic comedy: an illustration of this is Claire Denis's 2002 film adaptation of Emmanuelle Bernheim's *Friday Night*, in which the massive strikes of 1995 in Paris are the context for an unexpected meeting and a one-night stand between two strangers. The strikes that bring Paris to a standstill could be read as a metaphor for the central character's "strike" against monogamy and conjugal life. In the final shot, she runs in the empty streets, grinning and exhilarated after leaving a man she will probably never meet again asleep in a hotel room. There is no certainty about her future, but the way she occupies the urban space is suggestive of emancipation.

The divergent constructions of Paris, between the realism and the occasional darkness of *Cleo from 5 to 7* and the

dream-like and supernatural urban fantasy of *Amélie* (where, as in *Notting Hill* [1999], the ethnic homogeneity of the characters has been widely commented on and criticized), is recurrent in the French and foreign filmic representations of the city. They illustrate how Paris can generate the best and the worst for the cinematographic characters. In the Franco-American film *2 Days in Paris* (2007), one of the many rows between the two lovers takes place on the canal Saint-Martin. The French woman (played by the French actor–director based in the U.S., Julie Delpy) tries to comfort her American partner by saying, as if the name itself had a therapeutic power, "Please, let's stop it, we're in Paris!" The male lover shouts back: "We're not in Paris, we're in hell!" I could not help thinking how it echoes old Jules, the character played by Michel Simon in *L'Atalante*, declaiming more than seventy years earlier "Paris, ô ville infâme et merveilleuse."

BRIGITTE ROLLET is Senior Lecturer in French Cultural Studies at ULIP (University of London Institute in Paris).

ABSTRACT This essay deals with a number of Parisian film institutions as well as cinematic representations of the French capital, noting especially the way the city is depicted in recent films made by women.

KEYWORDS French cinema, Paris, film culture, the city on screen, women directors

Nebraska ad
quarter page

Wesleyan ad
half page

VIDEO FRAME ENLARGMENTS

BRUCE KAWIN COMPARES FRAMES CAPTURED FROM DVD AND ONES PHOTOGRAPHED FROM CELLULOID

There used to be two ways to illustrate a book or article with pictures from a film: to photograph a frame enlargment from a 16mm or 35mm print or to select a production still that originally came from a press kit. Production stills, distributed for reproduction in magazines and newspapers, are posed and generally give sharp views of the sets and the actors in costume, and sometimes they approximate the blocking of actual scenes. For a literal view of what is on screen for a fraction of a second, one needs a copy of an actual frame from the movie. A frame enlargment could be printed as a photograph and submitted to the publisher as an 8x10 or as a 35mm slide. Production stills, usually found in archives and in memorabilia stores, most often were 8x10s.

Now, however, fewer prints are available from which to shoot frame enlargments, and DVDs, with their tantalizing restorations, are everywhere. Schools often meet their budgets by showing films in class on DVD, in spite of the fact that students are left watching a TV. As film classes rent fewer prints, distributors have less incentive to replace scratched and faded prints; thus fewer titles remain available on film—in good shape or any shape. Frame enlargments shot from inferior prints are liable to be scratched and faded too. The very frame one wants may be a wreck. But on a DVD, the frame may be pristine. The only problem is that it is a video image, not a film image. The frame is electronic and must be reproduced not with a camera but with a computer, yielding a digital video image rather than a photographic one. Even when the digital file is printed on photographic paper, it betrays its video origins. And press kits have gone electronic. Rather than a sheaf of 8x10 black-and-whites and color slides, most of them now offer production stills and the occasional frame enlargment only on a CD, in the form of high-resolution film scans. So an article or a book manuscript may now be accompanied not by a sheaf of photographs but by a disc to which frame enlargments made from video sources and production stills copied from electronic press kits have been transferred.

We may be looking at the future of frame reference. DVDs already are more widely available than celluloid prints, and the hardware and software for video frame-grabbing are simple to use. The question is, how good are video frame enlargments in comparison with enlargments shot on and from film? To test this, I needed a close shot and a long shot, and I needed to be able to examine and present, to the extent possible, the identical frames on film and on video. I secured a 35mm frame from *Citizen Kane* (1941), which I then printed as an 8x10, and an 8x10 35mm frame enlargment from *Intolerance* (1916), then shot (or "grabbed") the same frames from VHS, laserdisc, and DVD copies of the films, both when the image was moving and when it was paused. For those first tests, I used a frame-grabbing device called Snappy, which is now available only on eBay; it was made by Play, ran only on a PC, and plugged into the parallel port. Any video source with a standard RCA jack could be connected to Snappy, while most of the products now available are designed to grab only from DVDs. Snappy got the best results with DVDs and CAV laserdiscs, and it did best when it grabbed from a moving source. Tests with color and black-and-white films—the color film used was *Vertigo* (1958)—produced nearly the same results when printed on black-and-white stock (as pictures would be in *Film Quarterly* and most books). For the final test, I grabbed the frames from a paused DVD using the VideoLAN Client (VLC) media player. The VLC player is free, runs on a PC or a Mac, and can be downloaded from www.videolan.org/vlc/; it also got better results than Snappy or any other frame grabber I tested. It did equally well with paused and moving sources and with color and black-and-white. Although I had a professional laboratory print the video frames as 8x10s for close study, the publisher used the electronic files to print them in *Film Quarterly* on glossy paper. Only the final published versions

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Figure 1 (above): a 35mm frame enlargment from *Citizen Kane*. © RKO Pictures, Inc. Licensed by Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.
Figure 2 (below): a VLC video frame enlargment from *Citizen Kane*. © RKO Pictures, Inc. Licensed by Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Figure 3 (above): a 35mm frame enlargment from *Intolerance*.
Figure 4 (below): a VLC video frame enlargment from *Intolerance*.

offer a rigorous example of how video enlargments really look, and how they might look in a book. On a computer monitor, of course, they look fine; their suitability for electronic publishing and distribution can be taken for granted (once one has cleared the rights if that is necessary; the same legal rules that apply to film frame enlargments apply to video frame enlargments).

There are two ways to grab a DVD frame with VLC. In Windows, Linux, or Unix, if one is playing the DVD in full-screen mode or in a smaller window, one hits Ctrl-Alt-S; on a Mac, Command-Alt-S (in Windows, hit the S key last while holding down the other two, or the program crashes). When playing the movie in a smaller window, one also has the option of going to Snapshot on the Video menu. In addition, the smaller window allows one to use the pause control, which takes a second or less (it varies) to stop the image; it helps a great deal when one is trying to grab a particular frame, even if it takes some practice. Almost immediately after one hits Snapshot with the mouse or presses the three keys, VLC presents the image of the captured frame in a small window. On a PC, VLC accumulates shots sequentially in a directory the user can specify (on the Settings menu, go to Preferences and then to Video; the video snapshot directory is listed there, along with the format in which the snapshot will be saved and the aspect ratio of the source). On a Mac, the shot appears on the desktop.

VLC defaults to flat settings. From the point of view of the test this was an advantage, because the idea was not to produce the best possible frame but to evaluate an unaugmented frame. Once a frame has been grabbed and saved as a file, it can be opened in a program like Adobe Photoshop and resized, brightened, and so on, augmentations and adjustments that are valid as long as the goal is to match the look of the original rather than to produce a nice new picture. VLC can grab from any source it can play; the easiest sources to use are DVDs and streaming media files. VLC can save the snapshot in a variety of formats, one of which (.png) is Photoshop-friendly and preferred by some publishers. The VLC grab can be made while the movie is running or paused. VLC shoots color sources in color; its other relevant default is that it grabs frames in the aspect ratio of the source. Whichever brand of frame grabber one uses, it is important to make sure that the software preserves the original aspect ratio; many such player/grabbers default to 16x9 rather than 1.33:1, stretching a full-frame image sideways.

Whether desktop video frame enlargments can stand up to celluloid frame enlargments in the first place appears from the comparison below.

Figure 1 was printed from a 35mm frame taken from an internegative of *Citizen Kane*, near the end of the boarding-house scene narrated by Thatcher in his memoirs. I am grateful to Robert Carringer and RKO for getting me this frame and to Warner Bros. for permission to reproduce it. On the nose of the boy (Buddy Swan as Kane) there is a dark, curled hair. This hair appears on this frame in almost every film and video print of *Kane*; the restored DVD and print have "cleaned" it away. It is a film artifact. Because the hair is positive on a print, it cannot have fallen on the negative; it must have fallen on the interpositive and then been copied to the internegative from which prints were struck. Every photographed hair and bit of snow is distinct, the cap has a deep texture, there is great detail in and around the eyes, and every line is smooth. The shadow at the base of the cheek and part of the neck, however blotchy it is, has many points of definition; the texture and tones of the skin vary from the bright top of the cheek to the dark lower jaw, where the sled is beginning to dissolve in. There is a flare of light in his hair and on his neck.

Figure 2 is a VLC snapshot, a video grab of high quality. It is not exactly the same frame as Figure 1, but it is close—perhaps two or three frames ahead (the dissolve has not started). The image has been cropped along the perimeter, approximately three percent. The exposure level of the shot is dark. The eyebrow and the ends of the hairs that touch the boy's ear are fuzzier than the hairs in the film image. The tiny bits of snow above the ear, on the cheek, and on the cap are less sharply defined. The line around the boy's iris is jagged, like the cutting edge of a saw; the line has "jaggies" but should be smooth and even. There is a similar problem at the top edge of the bottom eyelid, which shows scan lines and a three-leveled blotch. The shadow on the cheek looks like a shadow rather than a skin defect; the most difficult area of the frame to render, this shadowed part of the face is adequate. The overall quality of the skin has, however, gone a little spongy. The freckles are in focus. The hair on the nose is missing—because the frame has been restored and in any case because this is a slightly different frame; the flare and the sled are missing, too, because this is a different frame. But the cap is missing some of its texture, and the eye's line some of its smoothness, because this is a video frame.

In other words, the lower resolution and electronic nature of the video image have consequences, here seen most plainly in the skin texture and in the number of distinguishable hairs in the eyebrow. These may be considered minor differences, unless a long shot makes a face the height of that eyebrow.

Figure 3 is a frame enlargment made by the Museum of Modern Art from a 35mm print of *Intolerance*. The shot comes at the start of the sequence depicting Belshazzar's Feast, and it is crammed with small details that demand high resolution. Everything in this frame is distinct and in focus. One can make out the people on the top of the back central wall, who are extremely small, and the darker line running horizontally beneath them and above the line of decorations. Partway down that wall, the tops of two huge, geometrically framed doorways or openings let the sunlight through (it is cut off by another great wall in the farthest background). Through the left doorway one can see a hanging drape catch the sunlight in a bow shape, while through the right one there is a lit triangle, perhaps a staircase, one side jagged-edged and one side cut off by a smooth shadow. One can make out the people on the balcony of the pillar at the upper right as well as the people on the balconies of the other three pillars. The central columns of the pillars are curved rather than straight, and one can see the lines in their sides. At the central right, the large statue of a seated goddess is easy to make out, and so is the lion near her feet. All the true horizontal and vertical lines are straight and sharp. Among the clearer smaller details are the lines on the trunks of the elephant statues in the bottom row, the alternation of dark and light areas on the bottom central steps, and the rows of lion's heads that run up the sides of those steps. Even in the case of the people who are closest to the camera it is not possible to make out any faces, but their bodies are clearly defined.

One aspect of a film frame enlargment that does not carry forward into video is that everything in this frame is definitive. This is the source, the criterion of what is meant to be readable in the original image.

Figure 4 is a VLC grab of a frame from a bit later—roughly a second—in the same shot. Between Figure 3 and Figure 4, the camera has moved slightly forward. The first thing one notices is that dark horizontal line at the top of the wall in the central background, for it has expanded to become a much wider band; it looks like a shadow, but in the film frame it clearly is not. I got the same dismal result using both of the currently available DVDs of *Intolerance* (Kino and Image) and shooting repeatedly, both when the movie was paused and when it was moving. The lines that are supposed to be clean, sharp verticals and horizontals are straight, however, and the bowing lines of the columns are rendered correctly. The curve of light on the hanging drape is there. One can make out the lion at the foot of the goddess if one knows it is a lion. But the alternating black-and-white areas on the lower central steps are not distinct, and the lion heads

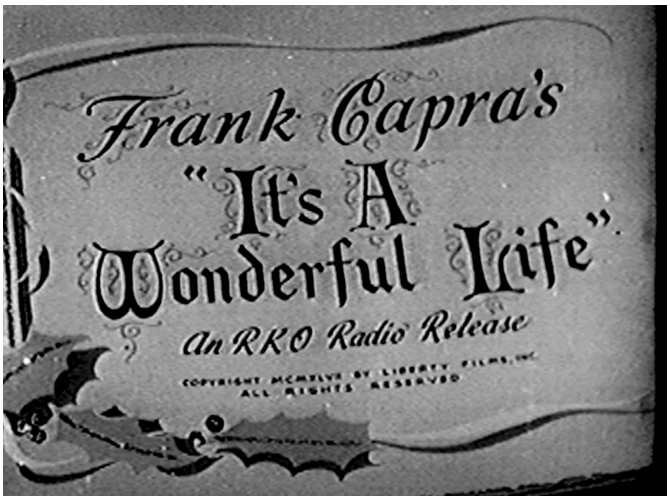

Figure 5: a Snappy video frame enlargment from *It's A Wonderful Life.*

at the sides of the steps look at best like spherical blobs. The geometrical outlines of the rear doors are dark and sharp, as are the thick outlines around the carved figures at the lower left and right. One has no trouble making out the larger elements of the shot: the elephant statues, the pillars, the statue of the seated goddess, the walls, the steps, and if not the individual dancers, the fact that there are a lot of dancers. One can with difficulty make out the people on the balconies of the pillars, but it is clear that they are people. Those on the top of the back wall are barely visible; the people behind the left doorway are an indistinguishable mass. Despite the straightness of the lines, which VLC has rendered especially well, the lower resolution gives a fuzzy quality to the whole image. The range from black to white is reduced to a short range of grays. The hard-edged texture of the original is lost and with it some essential aspect of the grandeur of the mise-en-scène. Nevertheless the general outlines of the shot and the architecture of the set come across, as do details like the jagged edge of the triangle seen through the right doorway. This shot poses a very different problem from the *Citizen Kane* shot, for it is an extreme long shot full of small details rather than a close shot of a face. One must conclude that the lower resolution of the video frame enlargment, along with its tendency to flatten the lighting, made an excellent grab of this frame impossible. Then there is the matter of the spreading out of that black line into a band of shadow, the only distortion introduced by VLC that could be read as modifying the frame and introducing what looks like a different object. It is not a common problem with VLC, but it is a problem in this particular grab, making the grab unusable as well as uncharacteristically unreliable. For most video frame enlargments do convey the gist of their originals, even though they cannot convey all of their essence.

Comparing these four images, it is clear that at the current level of technology, a video frame enlargment sometimes distorts lines and curves, often fails to resolve the finest details, and has a narrower range of grays. Both film frames run from nearly white to nearly black, while the video frames run from light to medium-dark gray, giving the image a less defined and less composed look. The problematic skin texture in Figure 2 is found in many video frame enlargments, but VLC's results are better than others'. The obscuring of detail in Figure 4 is characteristic of current technology; it will take more work before those blobs on the banisters turn back into lions' heads.

In a pinch, then, in the absence of a film frame, grabbing a video frame enlargment from a DVD can yield an adequate image, though an admittedly inferior one whose details may not be clear enough to read and whose tones may be less photographic. The smaller the final picture, the better the image will look, even though it will still look like a video. But if it is small and sharp enough, it can pass not for film but for a viable reference, a reliable approximation of the frame. The reproduction is degraded in comparison with the original, and is inexpensive and ready at one's fingertips, for the same reason: that it is video. If Benjamin were writing today, he might observe that a good release print now has the aura of an original while video is the inferior but inexpensive medium of mass distribution.

Film is better, but these results are not bad. One must use film if the point is to uphold a certain technical and optical standard, if one wants every detail of the image to be readable, if one wants the absolute tones and textures of the original, and if one wants the best-looking final product. It should, however, still be possible to illustrate an article or book with video frame enlargments if one is willing to make sacrifices in the areas of detail and texture. But if the point is simply to document a reference and if convenience is a consideration, a video frame enlargment can hardly be improved on. One such reference is offered in Figure 5, substantiating that the title of *It's A Wonderful Life* (1947) should be spelled with a capital *A* by reproducing the movie's original title card.

BRUCE KAWIN is Professor of English and Film at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

ABSTRACT This essay discusses frame-enlargment technology, comparing digital and photographic alternatives and concluding, after the analysis of specific examples, that frames photographed from a 35mm print are much superior in quality.

KEYWORDS VLC, frame enlargments, DVD capture, digital, grabbing

Kino Ad
half page

PAINTING BY THE NUMBERS: THE DIGITAL INTERMEDIATE

JOHN BELTON EXPLORES THE DIGITAL MANIPULATION OF COLOR IN RECENT HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

"Digital Intermediate" (DI) is a term that refers to the intermediate stage of post-production between the initial digitization of original film material and final transfer of those digital files back to film. DI begins with the digital scanning of an original camera negative that transforms it into a data file. Once this is done, a digital workflow occurs in which various operations take place, including "conforming the negative . . . importing and integrating visual effects elements," incorporating an edit decision list, performing color correction and timing, and outputting the finished digital file to film.[1] Though it includes virtually all post-production operations, the DI process has become primarily associated with color grading. Digital technology has been used for years for film editing, computer-generated imagery, and special effects. What's new about the DI process is that it involves the digitization of all or nearly all of the film's images, rather than the partial digitization involved in these earlier features of the post-production workflow. As such, it marks an important extension of the digitization of the cinema.

For a truly digital cinema, original photography must be digital as well as projection in the theater. Most of us have become familiar with these highly publicized links in the digital chain. But the DI process—the vital stage that transforms the entire chain into a digital chain—remains relatively invisible. The following essay attempts to make this stage of the chain more visible by isolating and discussing examples of DI processing that call attention to the process itself.

Historically speaking, the introduction of the DI process is relatively recent, occurring just before the initial attempts to innovate digital projection. A low-resolution version of DI was initially used in the post-production of TV commercials. Its first appearance in feature film production came in the mastering of Gary Ross's *Pleasantville* (1998) in which there were over 1700 visual effects shots, primarily involving the removal or manipulation of color.[2] Not all of the film went through DI—only the black-and-white fantasy section in the sitcom sequence. In 2000, *O Brother Where Art Thou?* became the first Hollywood feature to be entirely digitized for color grading and was the first feature to be scanned at a full 2K. (*Pleasantville* had been scanned at just under 2K, at 1,920 pixels by 1,440 lines.)[3] In 2004, *Spider-Man 2* became the first film scanned at 4K.[4]

Industry experts estimate that in 2005, slightly less than half of the major studio releases had gone through the DI process, most of them at 2K.[5] By mid-2007, the percentage of studio films put through a DI rose to about seventy.[6] DI is primarily associated with big-budget Hollywood films—in large part, because it is a relatively expensive procedure. In 2004, the cost of a full DI treatment for a Hollywood feature was $250,000 at 2K and $1 million at 4K.[7] In 2005, less costly, 2K DIs could be found in Hollywood for around $120,000.[8] But the digital intermediate process is increasingly being used by independent filmmakers as well who can get an HD-SR DI for under $100,000.[9]

The advent of DI has transformed the Hollywood film industry in a variety of ways. It has influenced decisions made on the set during production and has increasingly become a factor during pre-production when filmmakers must decide on whether to go through (and budget for) a DI or not. For example, Robert Richardson, the director of cinematography on Martin Scorsese's *The Aviator* (2005), estimated that he was able to "save about thirty minutes a day during production" because he knew the film would go through a DI process and that certain time-consuming lighting problems, such as flagging "light off walls that were too hot" could be solved "faster in DI." [10] Newton Thomas Sigel, the cinematographer on *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind* (2002), said: "The digital intermediate is a tremendous opportunity to have yet more control [over the image]. You're continuing the process of cinematography when you color-correct your

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The Wizard of Oz: in Kansas, Dorothy's world is in black-and-white, but when she opens the door, she finds herself in Technicolor Oz.

© 1939 Loew's Incorporated. DVD: Warner Home Video (U.K.)

film, and you can have an impact almost as great as when you did your original photography. With contrast, power windows, recomposing and primary or secondary color correction, you can really reshoot your film in post."[11] In the old days, filmmakers used to say they would "fix it in post-[production]." Now with DI, they tend to say they'll "make it in post."[12] This aspect of the DI process presents both positive and negative possibilities for the director of photography. Quentin Tarantino, for example, "reshot" both of his *Kill Bill* films (2003, 2004) in post-production, much to the consternation of cinematographer Robert Richardson who was left out of this particular loop and who did not approve of the director's retouching of his work.[13]

At any rate, DI has played an increasingly important role in what contemporary films look like. DI colorists, for example, can isolate individual elements of the image and manipulate them without changing anything else, enabling filmmakers to change the saturation of one particular color of one particular object in a shot, to control the brightness of light coming through a window, to tinker with general atmosphere, or to alter skin tone. As *Variety* commented: "The DI basically does for movies what PhotoShop and similar software can do to enhance still photos, though on a more sophisticated level."[14] One of the most spectacular examples of this quasi-pointillist control can be found in the final fantasy sequence of *Finding Neverland* (2005), when the interior of the Davis home opens up into a garden. As cinematographer Robert Schaeffer describes it, "In almost every single shot as the camera is panning and tilting, the colors of the flowers are rippling from yellow to blue to orange to pink. We tried to do it conventionally but it wasn't happening fast enough so the whole thing was done during the DI."[15] This potential for the micro-manipulation of the image became a feature that—years earlier—attracted director Gary Ross to the DI process for the making of *Pleasantville*.

It is on this area of contemporary digital aesthetics that I wish to focus this essay—in particular on the use of DI for color correction. The hybrid, monochrome/polychrome "look" of *Pleasantville* has consequences both for our traditional understanding of how black-and-white and color function in classical Hollywood cinema—and for what André Bazin refers to as our "psychology of the image."[16] DI is emblematic of larger issues raised by the digitization of the cinema. *Pleasantville*'s use of DI to manipulate color foregrounds the different effects of digital and analogue imaging and plays with our understanding of the relationship between digital and analogue (or photochemical) imaging. The use of color in *Pleasantville* opens a window onto our traditional understanding of the photographic image as homogenous, as a whole constituted by the frame that groups its contents together. The film's narrative explores the disruptive potential of the violation of the image's chromatic homogeneity while simultaneously setting in place a mechanism to restore that homogeneity. In this scenario, analogue continuity (figured as black-and-white) is threatened by digital discontinuity—the break-up of the image into discrete picture elements (seen in the appearance of color within a black-and-white frame). This threat is resolved by the restoration of chromatic continuity—black-and-white disappears entirely, leaving an all-color, all-the-time world. This scenario, in turn, can also be seen as a metaphor for the digitization of the cinema. In the digitization process, analogue (in the form of the profilmic event or film of that event) is converted to digital only to be restored to analogue (projection prints) and it is restored to an analogue that is somehow "better" for having undergone digitization.

BLACK-AND-WHITE VS. COLOR: DIFFERENT DIEGETIC REGISTERS

What makes *Pleasantville* of special interest is not so much that it was the first Hollywood feature to go through a DI. Nor is it even that the film calls attention to this new technology in ways similar to the first sound, color, and widescreen films by spectacularizing the novel features of the new technology. What makes it unique is that it *narrativizes* the presence and absence of color and black-and-white. In this way, the film becomes a text *about* color, black-and-white, and the relationship between the two. This is surely not the first film to be "about" that topic. But the fact that it does so from a vantage point of digital technology's ability to manipulate images is important for our understanding of cinema in the digital age.

The basic concept of *Pleasantville* involves the use of black-and-white and color in a single film. In the past, this combination has been accomplished in a variety of ways. Prior to the advent of color negative and positive film, black-and-white film could be hand-painted, stenciled, tinted, toned, or otherwise colored. With the advent of methods of filming and printing in color, brought about by two-strip Technicolor in the 1920s and by three-strip Technicolor in the 1930s, black-and-white and color footage could be combined by cutting together sequences filmed in black-and-white with those filmed in color. The classic example of this is *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), which features a black-and-white frame story set in Kansas and a color fantasy set in Oz. Like earlier instances of hybrid films made in the transition-to-sound era, such as *The Wedding March* (1928), *Broadway Melody* (1929), or *Hells' Angels* (1930), conventional narrative material was filmed in black-and-white while spectacle was shot in color. For the most part, each chromatic register enjoyed a different diegetic reality. Black-and-white footage signified one narrative world and color another—but each world functioned as a credible diegetic reality in itself—in part because of its internal chromatic consistency. Moments where footage shifted from one chromatic register to another violated that earlier diegetic world but did so in ways that the larger narrative as a whole ultimately recuperated—such as in *Oz* which ultimately identifies the color footage as Dorothy's dream.

The combination of black-and-white and color footage became conventionalized from the sound era to the 1970s when Hollywood continued to make significant numbers of films in black-and-white. Audiences understood the conventional associations (black-and-white equals mundane reality; color equals fantasy or spectacle) and viewed this segregation of spaces as in *The Wizard of Oz* or times as in Kenneth Branagh's *Dead Again* (1991) as distinct but interrelated diegetic registers. By implementing the convention, audiences could readily make sense of hybrid films such as *Bonjour Tristesse* (1958), in which the dismal present in Paris filmed in black-and-white is juxtaposed to a happier past in the south of France filmed in color. In *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), Woody Allen reversed the convention, presenting the mundane framing story in color and the central character's fantasy world in black-and-white. To some extent, *Pleasantville* could be said to provide an additional twist to Allen's reworking of the convention. It does so by gradually turning the fantasy world—here a TV show rather than a movie within a movie—from black-and-white to color. Coincidentally, in both films, actor Jeff Daniels plays a character who becomes an object of romantic fascination for an unhappily married woman.

COLOR WITHIN BLACK-AND-WHITE: THE HETEROGENEITY OF THE IMAGE

Pleasantville's color system violates the "segregation of spaces" convention by introducing color image elements into otherwise black-and-white image spaces. Trouble in paradise begins when a black-and-white character suddenly sees a red rose on a black-and-white bush in a black-and-white garden. *Pleasantville* is not unique in "integrating" color and black-and-white within a single image. In the silent era, individual objects were often hand-painted but usually along with other objects in the same frame—thus the famous red flag in *Potemkin* (1925) was seen against a blue sky. As Ross's film adds more and more color to the frame, the "look" of the film recapitulates the history of color in the cinema from hand-painting to color stencil work to full, three-color Technicolor. The film ends with the lush, saturated Technicolor of the 1950s taking over Pleasantville, while the frame story returns us to the desaturated look of contemporary films.

Aside from silent-era stenciling, single objects in single colors within larger black-and-white images remain rare in the sound cinema. One memorable example would be the blue-and-red Siamese fighting fish in Francis Ford Coppola's otherwise black-and-white *Rumble Fish* (1983). The most famous example, of course, is the "red" coat on the little girl in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993). Spielberg's red coat is the cause of much critical speculation, in part, because it is not easy to narrativize. On a formal level, it seems to look backward and forward to the framing sequences in the present which were filmed in color. But these scenes are full-color while the red coat images are not. Similarly, there are a number of shots in Robert Rodriguez's and Frank Miller's black-and-white film *Sin City* (2005) that contain single colors, such as the red dress in the opening sequence,

Pleasantville: characters from a color world find themselves in black-and-white. A bright red rose on a black-and-white bush.

© 1998 New Line Cinema. DVD: New Line Home Video

the red tail-light on a car, red Converse sneakers, a treacherous hooker's deep blue eyes, or the yellow fleshtones of the Yellow Bastard character. Some of these colors look back to Miller's graphic novels in which color is occasionally used as an accent. But, as in *Schindler's List*, these isolated splashes of colors tend to violate the homogeneity of the otherwise black-and-white diegetic narrative space. They rupture the coherence of one diegetic regime, invading it with elements we understand to belong to another. They are perhaps best understood not as realistically motivated but as artistically motivated—as instances of authorial signature.[17]

Clearly, color manipulation poses a potential threat to our traditional understanding of chromatic and achromatic color systems and their creation of a credible narrative space. The red coat in *Schindler's List* inexplicably extends the film's black-and-white spectrum momentarily to introduce a range of the color spectrum that has traditionally been translated into the greyscale of black-and-white cinematography in black-and-white films. Does every black-and-white object potentially have the ability to open up a portal into another spectrum where its color unconscious is laid bare? DI gives filmmakers the possibility of penetrating traditional barriers. It enables them to create a new chromatic spectrum that includes both black-and-white and color. *Pleasantville* opens a door onto innovation, but then it retreats to convention. In this sense, it mirrors the course of digital imaging technology which tends to simulate older, analogue, image-making conventions, not to create radically new perceptual modes.

In *Pleasantville*, Ross narrativizes his unique use of color. Unlike the red coat in *Schindler's List*, the colored objects in *Pleasantville* are realistically motivated. The film's violation of the wholeness of the black-and-white image has narrative justification. Nonetheless, through this violation the film does raise questions about what Bazin refers to as "the psychology of the image." This term refers to how we, as subjects, perceive and understand the image. The photographic image, for example, enjoys "a quality of credibility absent from all other picture-making" in large part because of what we know about how it is produced ("by automatic means") in relation to how other forms of images are produced (by quasi-subjective means).[18] Though we can all agree that the production of photographic images is not quite "automatic," we nonetheless do continue to perceive them differently than we do painted images. Digital images complicate any Bazinian psychology of the image that insists on its ontological status. We know that the relationship of a digital image to what it is an image of involves forms and/or stages of mediation potentially far greater than those involved in the typical photographic image. DI represents a perfect instance of such mediation—the mediation of image data during the post-production process. For the most part, it is difficult for us to perceive this manipulation. To the extent that digital imaging, in general, effectively simulates photochemical imaging, it does not effect our psychology of the image—that is, not until it becomes visible—as in spectacular digital special-effects sequences or in digital image break-up.

Pleasantville, however, does make DI visible—even if that visibility is narratively recuperated. And it does so in ways that call into question Bazinian notions of the wholeness of the image. In what way is the image a whole? One might begin with the fact that it is presented and consumed as such. In both instances, the borders of the frame impose coherence—even unity—on the contents of the frame. Rudolf Arnheim argued that sound introduced discord into the "universal silence of the image" by giving speech or sound effects to some parts of the image and withholding it from other parts.[19] From the vantage point of the transition to sound, Arnheim's perception had a certain validity. But within a few years sound was quickly integrated into the world of the image and a new "psychology of the image" emerged that transformed what Arnheim saw as heterogeneity into a new homogeneity.

Sin City: the woman's eyes go from black-and-white to green when the killer lights her cigarette. Marv's face—a composite of Mickey Rourke, make-up, and digital processing. © 2005 Miramax Film Corporation. DVD: Dimension

Unlike *The Wizard of Oz*, *Pleasantville* combines color and black-and-white in the same frame, violating the integrity of the image. The image is revealed as not whole, but made up of parts. Of pixels. This mixture forces us to perceive the image in terms of picture elements, not whole pictures. To cast this in the language of motion-picture technology, photochemical imaging practices necessarily treat the image as a whole; digital-imaging practices necessarily treat the image differently—as an array of discrete picture elements. Photochemical color grading, for example, affects the image as a whole. It is impossible to adjust one color or part of the image without adjusting it all. DI permits more focused adjustments—changes on the level of minute picture elements. *Pleasantville* uses digital technology to do what it can do best—manipulate picture content from within the image. The film foregrounds this manipulation in the form of selective colorization—of objects, people, clothing, places. Selective colorization, in turn, can be understood in terms of the presence and absence of color. In this new dynamic of the image, black-and-white in *Pleasantville* comes to signify an absence of color. It is a lack that the film's narrative seeks to liquidate. If the image were all black-and-white, there would be no lack. Because it is part black-and-white and part color, we sense the inadequacy of the film's black-and-white world. In the narrative, it is the old, pre-digital world of black-and-white that is defined as absence. Color is figured as presence. Color rejuvenates the town of Pleasantville. Though figured as a destabilizing element, the novelty of color is quickly contained. The threat that color poses to black-and-white is resolved by the creation of a new social and chromatic conformity that erases all difference. The fantasy world of the TV sitcom embraces the transition to color. Difference disappears; color becomes the new norm.

The bursts of color in *Sin City*, or what one reviewer, linking the two films, referred to as "Unpleasantville," function quite differently.[20] They do not represent narrative possibility—an alternate world of color to which individual characters might aspire. They are hallucinatory fragments of color that exist in a diegetic limbo—neither quite inside the story space nor outside of it. In *Pleasantville*, Ross desaturated the colors in an attempt to integrate the color elements within the surrounding black-and-white image. The addition of grey brings the color closer to black-and-white. In *Sin City*, Rodriguez and Miller *saturate* the colors, separating them from the extreme blacks and whites of the surrounding image. At the same time, the color draws the eye to it like a magnet, pulling the spectator out of the diegesis into moments of pure graphic spectacularity.

In the opening scene of *Sin City*, a woman (Mary Shelton) in a red dress walks (with her back to the camera) out across a balcony overlooking the city. The red dress pulls the camera and the viewer's attention with it. A man (Josh Hartnett) follows her; the woman turns, revealing a pair of red lips the same shade of color as the dress. The man gives her a cigarette, tells her she is "everything a man could ever want," and then shoots her. When the man lights her cigarette and tells her that what particularly attracts him to her are her eyes, her eyes slowly change color from black-and-white to pale green. After he shoots her, her body slumps to the floor. An overhead shot reveals her red dress spread out around her on the floor, like a pool of blood. Color draws our attention from one graphic element to another, accenting the romantic aspects of the scene.

The film begins *in medias res* with the middle—or more likely the end—of an archetypal film noir narrative. This opening action hovers in narrative limbo for the next two hours, only to hook up with the main narrative thread at the end of the film when the man returns—this time in a hotel elevator—where he will presumably kill Becky (Alexis Bledel), the blue-eyed betrayer of Gail (Rosario Dawson) and her fellow Sin City prostitutes. This opening scene becomes a piece of a jigsaw puzzle that does not find its place in the

overall narrative until the very end. The color red, however, remains in limbo. It is a powerful marker—it is a means of graphic punctuation, but its signification in terms of the narrative remains open-ended. The film develops no color system to anchor it or give it meaning.

To some extent, this echoes the graphic spectacularity of the overall look of the film. Filmed in color against a green screen, *Sin City*—both the film and the place—is largely the creation of computer-generated imagery. Live action is seamlessly folded into animation, making it virtually impossible to distinguish between the two. This hybridity of the image is nowhere more apparent than in the figure of Marv: the actor Mickey Rourke's face is so heavily made-up that it seems to be drawn—the product of pen and ink rather than flesh and blood. In this in-between world that is both live action and animation, the traditional rules no longer apply.

The film's splashes of color tend to work against the lifeless look of CGI. Animated eruptions of color break through the black-and-white skin of the film, functioning like a surrealist musical score to highlight random objects and draw them into a stream of color consciousness that refuses to submit itself to rational analysis. It is color for color's sake. It is an exercise in graphic stylization that experiments with various digital tools, from Photoshop to Paintbox, to see what the new medium can do. In comparison with *Pleasantville*, *Sin City* assumes some of the features of an experimental work. It refuses to narrativize the relation of color to black-and-white, blurring the boundaries between the clearly diegetic (black-and-white) and the possibly non-diegetic or extra-diegetic (color). More importantly, the film refuses to resolve the differences between color and black-and-white. It refuses to restore the homogeneity of the image by creating a single chromatic system. Instead, it explores the new possibilities made available by digital technology for the fragmentation of the image into distinct picture elements, opting for heterogeneity rather than homogeneity. To this extent, it resembles avant-garde film in its exploration of an uncharted area in which previous codes and conventions have been left behind.

THE DISCOURSE OF COLORIZATION

Sin City exemplifies state-of-the-art digital imaging and an uncomplicated enthusiasm for new digital technology. *Pleasantville* is a bit more ambivalent about digital technology. Paul Grainge has read *Pleasantville* as a discourse on digital imaging. He argues that the film "revisits the question of digital colourisation" but does so in a way that "reflects a changing attitude toward the digital re-presentation of the past."[21] Colorization was a form of electronic color manipulation that epitomized anxieties about "an emerging digital age."[22] By the time of *Pleasantville*, "digital imaging . . . has become less of a threat and more an intrinsic part of (new) media life."[23] "*Pleasantville* revisits and recasts the issue of film colourisation, adopting a highly reflexive attitude towards the discursive intersection of memory and textuality."[24] Color is thus used to "question, interrogate and problematise the forms and values of the (media) past caricatured in Pleasantville."[25]

Grainge usefully calls attention to the discourse of colorization that surrounds the reception of the film, but he does so at the cost of repressing details as to how the film was actually made. That is, the film uses digital technology to remove color, not to add it. The film might be more accurately described as a parable about the role of digital technology in the process of self-actualization. A signature moment of self-reflexivity can be found in the scene where Bud (Tobey Maguire) applies grey make-up to the face of his TV mother, Betty (Joan Allen) to conceal its new-found color. Like Ross's DI colorist, Bud masks the color that lies beneath the surface of the image. This effacement of color represents merely one stage in the larger process of self-actualization. As Ross rather tritely and somewhat literally put it, the film moves toward a climax where characters "let . . . out what is inside them—their true colors."[26]

Scott Higgins has suggested that the film emerges as a watershed in public thinking about the electronic and digital manipulation of color.[27] Before *Pleasantville*, the electronic manipulation of color was associated with the destruction of important landmarks of our collective cultural memory. With *Pleasantville*, digital manipulation of color became a creative act, providing artists with hitherto unavailable means of shaping the image and creating new works. The film engages with the discourse of colorization in a number of ways. It does so partially as a means of reference, providing a way for audiences to understand the interaction of the present with the past. But it also rewrites the "trauma" of colorization as a form of rejuvenation rather than as an Orwellian rewriting of the past. Colorization becomes a way of freeing ourselves from nostalgia for a black-and-white past (i.e., the black-and-white world of the TV sitcom).

Colorization is clearly a necessary context for thinking about the reception of the film. The film was made in the wake of the national debate over colorization that took place in the late-1980s.[28] Ross mentions colorization in interviews about the film. In describing the DI process for journalists unfamiliar with that technology, he explains that he worked on the picture with "a colorization company."[29] Critical reception of the film also refers to colorization, perhaps because the film's press book said that the treatment of color in

making the film was "similar to 'colorizing' an old Hollywood movie."[30] Critic John Calhoun mentioned the colorization controversy of the late 1980s and noted that in *Pleasantville* those skills had finally been put "to a positive use."[31] Jay Carr, reviewer for the *Boston Globe*, concluded his discussion of the film's color with the following statement: "I never thought I could be charmed by anything remotely resembling a pro-colorization message, but 'Pleasantville' is the exception."[32]

The fact that Ross was thinking about colorization as he set out to make a film in which black-and-white images are turned to color should be no surprise. He began thinking about the film in the mid-1990s, a few years after the polemics over colorization had peaked in 1989. By 1995, Ted Turner stopped colorizing old black-and-white Hollywood films. In the meantime, colorization had already begun to be put to less controversial use—not as a means of rejuvenating old black-and-white images but as a means of generating new categories of images for television commercials as well as motion pictures. Perhaps the most famous example of this is (again) *Schindler's List*, a black-and-white film with a color frame and two brief instances of colorization within the black-and-white footage. What's interesting about the colorization in Spielberg's film is that it anticipates the focused colorization of single elements within the image found more extensively in *Pleasantville*. According to Spielberg's cinematographer Janusz Kaminski, the two instances of colorization include the famous example of the young girl in the red (actually pink-orange) coat and the barely visible blue stamp on Jewish identity cards that permits them to work in Schindler's factory.[33] The fact that Ross was thinking about *Pleasantville* from the perspective of colorization has anecdotal support in his extensive reliance during preproduction on the advice of Michael Southard who had prior experience "digitally creating color for commercials and music videos."[34] Southard, Ross' chief color-timer, began his film career at Color Systems Technology, the company that colorized old black-and-white Hollywood films for Turner.[35] Ross and Southard were initially uncertain as to whether the film should be shot in black-and-white and then colorized or shot in color and then have some of the color removed. As a result, the idea of colorization was intimately bound up with the conceptualization of the project.

But if colorization provides a historical context for the reception of *Pleasantville*, the film clearly rewrites the basic terms of the controversy to figure colorization in a more positive light. Color is not an Orwellian rewriting of the past but an "open sesame" to the future. In strictly technological terms, the term "colorization" is, in fact, extremely misleading. The effects Ross creates were not achieved by adding color (as Turner did) but by removing it—by turning color images into black-and-white images. In other words, the film works on the premise of the existence of an original color that has somehow been removed. Ross even alludes to this in his screenplay. As David/Bud argues in the final courtroom sequence, it is all about the discovery of one's potential, the discovery of "what's in you." In other words, color is already *in* the characters; it just needs to be released.

***Pleasantville*: a self-reflexive moment—Bud covers up the color in his TV mom's face.** © 1998 New Line Cinema.
DVD: New Line Home Video

(David/Bud's insistence that "It's in you" is amazingly similar to the tag line of a Gatorade advertising campaign that was launched in 1999.[36] The text of the ad asked "Is it in you?" and featured a black-and-white photograph of an athlete, Michael Jordan, whose sweat beaded in Gatorade colors. Just as in *Pleasantville*, the color emerged as testimony to the spirit/energy that was "in you.")

The film's rewriting of the cultural meanings associated with the relationship between black-and-white and color is structured around certain significant reversals. As just noted, the film does not so much add as subtract color. In the making of the film, all footage was originally shot on color negative, not on black-and-white. The negative was scanned into a digital file where color was removed from the sequences that were to be in black-and-white. The color of objects or places or people within this black-and-white frame was then manipulated, as it was in the colorization process, to achieve the desired effect.[37] In other words, the post-production of the film involved two different forms of color manipulation—color was removed to create black-and-white images and the color of specific aspects of the image was adjusted to add, retain, or alter color.

In the case of *Pleasantville*, DI is a tool that enables Ross and his director of photography, John Lindley, to produce an entirely new work, not to alter a work from a previous era. Within the narrative, the transformation of black-and-white images into color images functions as an expressive device

that documents the progressive movement of characters on the path to self-discovery/self-actualization. The narrative is about the destabilization of one "color" regime (achromatic black-and-white) by another (chromatic color)—and the resolution of that destabilization in the acknowledgment of the necessity of change.

In the script, "change" emerges as a historical necessity for the residents of Pleasantville and for the dysfunctional family in the framing story. The TV show *Pleasantville* is introduced in the format of television reruns that constantly recycle the same episodes. David knows these episodes by heart and is introduced as a character who retreats to this black-and-white world (the past) in response to familial dysfunction in the present. His sister, Jennifer (Reese Witherspoon), is caught up in similarly pointless cycles governed by peer pressure dictating social and sexual conformity; her desire to change is depicted in her sudden shift in interest from boys to books. After reading her first book—albeit one by D. H. Lawrence, she decides not to return to her old lifestyle at home; instead, she goes off to college in the fantasy world of Pleasantville.

David/Bud is one of the last teenagers in Pleasantville to go from black-and-white to color. Perhaps this is because David/Bud is so strongly aligned with the world of Pleasantville and the reassuring order it provides in his otherwise disordered real life. When he does "go color," it is the consequence of defending Betty and the first adult to turn from black-and-white to color, against the town's black-and-white bullies. When David returns to the present, he significantly turns off the black-and-white reruns of the *Pleasantville* sitcom and comforts his "real" mother, who sits weeping in the kitchen. Things do not return (as in *Wizard of Oz*) to the social and domestic order of the pre-fantasy world. They change—and the characters embrace the uncertainty of the future. In the litany of problems that confront contemporary society in the film—HIV Aids, global warming, and the unlikelihood of ever finding a rewarding job, the future stands in dramatic opposition to the known world of reruns of the sitcom—the dominant signifier of the past in the film. If David and Jennifer can change the past, surely they can change the future. They can do so because the future is digital—and, as we all know, it is therefore infinitely manipulable.

(I wish to thank Scott Higgins for reading and commenting on an earlier version of this essay.)

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JOHN BELTON is Professor of English and Film at Rutgers University. He is the author of five books, including *Widescreen Cinema* (Harvard University Press, 1992).

ABSTRACT This essay looks at the digital manipulation of color in such films as *Pleasantville* and *Sin City* in terms of their consequences for thinking about the "wholeness" and homogeneity of the image.

KEYWORDS Digital intermediate, post-production, digital aesthetics, color, colorization

CYBERPICKETING

On 31 October 2007 the standing arrangement between the Writers Guild of America (WGA) and the Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) expired. Under that agreement, WGA members received 0.3% of gross DVD sales; the guild demanded that this share increase to 2.5%, while also being extended to digitally transmitted media. The AMPTP countered with the old terms for DVDs and paid downloads, but nothing for streaming video, which it called "promotional." On 5 November, the WGA went on strike. At the time of filing (15 January 2008), the dispute continues.

The AMPTP has suggested that it is too early to judge the effectiveness of digital platforms. The writers disagree and have underscored the point by utilizing online video in strikingly effective ways to further the action. On the first day of the strike, the WGA posted "Why We Fight," a lively four-minute précis of its case, on YouTube, and there you can also find video footage of picket-line action, including speeches and testimonials from showrunners such as Seth MacFarlane and staffers. In "The Office is Closed," for instance, writers from the NBC sitcom report receiving no payment for ten "webisodes" that were shown with commercials and won an Emmy award.

Writers have been ingenious and creative in generating online content. Uploaded on 13 November, "Not The Daily Show, With Some Writer" featured a report of the type normally delivered on the show by Jon Stewart, but in this case recorded by a writer at a desk in front of the New York picket lines. The piece suggests a discrepancy between the negotiating position of Viacom—parent company of Comedy Central, on which *The Daily Show* is aired—and its billion-dollar lawsuit against Google and YouTube for copyright infringment: why sue if there are no significant profits at issue? (The Google/YouTube suit is also the subject of an entertainingly self-reflexive *Daily Show* segment, viewable at "Viacom Vs. YouTube.") Other persuasive bits of agitprop include "Voices of Uncertainty" and "Rupert Murdoch and the Holy Grail," which locate similar contradictions in archive news material of Disney, Viacom, NBC, CBS and Fox bosses. "Who Are They Lying To?" zeroes in with zeal on the different accounts of online revenue streams given by studios to stockholders and union members.

A whole mini-genre of satirical what-no-writers? clips ranges from shots of a kid in front of a blank TV to more or less witty re-imaginings of classic scripted moments. "WGA GALAXY" redoes the opening scrawl of *Star Wars* in stumbling teenspeak while "A World Without Writers" offers banal reworkings of iconic lines from the likes of *On The Waterfront* ("I coulda been a really really good boxer"), *Gone with the Wind* ("Whatever, Scarlett"), and *Citizen Kane* ("My sled!"). At unitedhollywood.com—a hub for the activism of the WGA and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), many of whom are striking in solidarity—you can see an impressive spoof procedural, "Murder Unscripted," with Eric Bogosian, Chris Noth, and other familiar faces mooching around a crime scene without much to say or do. There is also material on aworkingwriter.com and strikelife.net, set up by Christopher Nolan (a WGA member as well as a director).

Perhaps the best-known online videos are found in the "Speechless Hollywood" series, in which prominent SAG members perform in black-and-white shorts featuring minimal dialogue. The more imaginative of the thirty videos uploaded so far include Patricia Clarkson and Amy Ryan proving that it really is possible to read the phone book with emotion ('Episode 16 : 11/29') and Alan Cumming rendered speechless by an imaginary booking-line litany of theatrical spin-offs of reality TV shows: "for *America's Top Model: The Movie Part IV*, press five!" ("Episode 18 : 12/4"). There are also more than a few exchanges featuring actors talking gibberish, and some prolonged, po-faced poses which—as Jon Stewart suggested when *The Daily Show* returned to air without writers on 7 January—seem more apt to an HIV prevention campaign than industrial action.

Some of the supposedly comedic videos tend towards the self-pitying as well: in "Strike You! (A writers strike satire)," a WGA member endures a day of abuse from friends, actors, producers, and even his mother. (The talkback responses suggest that it at least resonates with other WGA members.) More effective is the self-mocking approach of "The Strike, Your Marriage and You." "Hi," it opens, "I'm Bob Kushell, a striking comedy writer out here in Los Angeles, California. If you're anything like me, you're tired of all these comedy writers putting videos on YouTube to show

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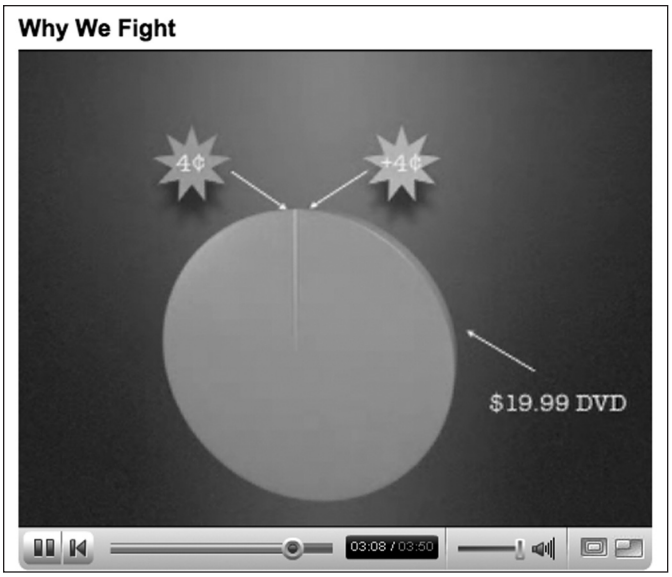

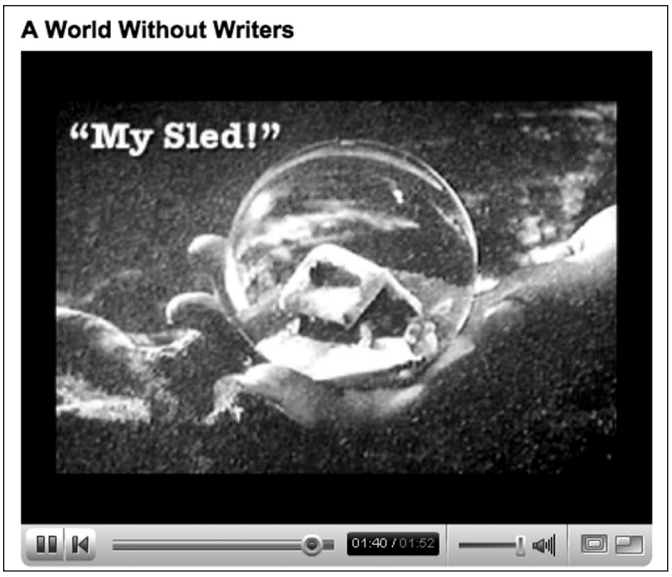

The WGA campaign on YouTube

how clever they are. I mean, seriously, guys, pencils down means pencils down!" Even cleverer is "The Strike, Your Marriage and You: 'The Healing,'" a follow-up-cum-making-of which includes a parody of David O. Russell's tantrum on the set of *I Heart Huckabees* (a viral video hit—see "I Don't Heart Huckabees").

Strike-breaking is broached in "WGA Strike gets violent!" A coffee shop becomes a speakeasy in which writers conceal their laptops and index cards to avoid the attention of the Writers Guild Police. A more blatantly satirical take is "Alex Perez: Scab Writer—Promo 1—Hi Hollywood." Uploaded even before the strike began, this is the first of a series of deliberately cloying shorts in which a supposedly proud scab lays out his wares for the studios to pick at. Predictably, it's far harder to find videos from real-life strike-breakers. In fact, there's surprisingly little content of any kind in support of the AMPTP. Videos apparently posted by producers are swiftly revealed as spoofs: "Studio Boss Roger A. Trevanti at the NY Picket Lines" offers some Sacha Baron Cohen-style situationism (Tony Kushner doesn't know quite what to make of this concocted executive), while "Videologblog: Writers Strike (Colbert Report writers)" sees another cod exec bewailing the AMPTP's lot in the style of Chris Crocker, an overwrought online champion of Britney Spears.

"Frog on the Writer's Strike," on the other hand, offers a heartfelt, vitriolic, and foul-mouthed attack on the WGA through the animated, French-accented mouth of a Lego figure—a regular character in War Dawgz, an online series whose makers have launched a libertarian "Fuck the Writers Campaign." It's a venomous, incoherent rant, but it highlights the fact that it was amateur writers who pioneered online content. Other such content-producers have also engaged with the strike as subject matter, albeit more sympathetically, including Zoomilk ("Stop The Hollywood Writers Strike Now!") and Ask A Ninja ("Ask A Ninja Special Delivery 17 'Writer's Strike'"). Although not hostile to the WGA, Zanzibar19's "Writers' Strike? YouTube to the Rescue!" is scathing about the quality of much mainstream content, offering to send viewers "a long list of all the independently-produced entertainment on the web you will ever need."

One consequence of the strike, however it is resolved, will likely be that the development of autonomous online entertainment programming is accelerated. The MySpace channel Strike TV was created in December as a fundraising venture under union oversight. Dedicated to creating original writer-owned content to screen on unitedhollywood.com, it has an explicit aim of long-term financial viability. It also claims to have recruited "a great many WGA members—showrunners, staff writers, screenwriters, you name it" and (if visible profiles are to be believed) counts Jon Favreau, Zach Braff, and Flight of the Conchords among its MySpace friends. The writers insist that online content is sustainable and profitable. The studios must choose whether to concede the point or risk having it proved at their expense—even, in the long run, at the expense of the entertainment sovereignty of television.

BEN WALTERS is a contributor to *Time Out London* and *Sight and Sound*, and the author of *Orson Welles* (Haus Publishing, 2004)

NO MORE THERAPY

The character of Tony Soprano is so well written, and so compellingly acted by James Gandolfini, that he galvanizes a hope which many of us may have that charming people also be good or, failing that, be capable of changing for the better. The hope may even tempt us to overlook the things Tony does on screen. David Remnick, writing in the *New Yorker* on 4 June 2007, a few days before the conclusion of the sixth and final season of David Chase's *The Sopranos*, looked back on "Tony's quest for a renewed sense of family, heritage, coherent truths, mental health," a description that would just as well fit Jay Gatsby. Remnick does note that "when we begin to grow too fond of Tony . . . Chase has him do something to undercut our sympathy," but the example he gives is a venomous but relatively harmless jibe Tony makes to his psychotherapist, Dr. Jennifer Melfi (Lorraine Bracco), about his son, A. J. (Robert Iler). The undercutting is often much more complete, as is the harm. In episode 18, for example, Tony shows no emotion as he uses his fingers to stop the breathing of his nephew, Christopher (Michael Imperioli), stunned and injured after he has crashed while driving. A close shot then shows the face of the dead man, but our view of him is partially blocked by Tony's blood-smeared hand. It is an emphatically unsympathetic image.

The potential for transformation has been a theme of *The Sopranos* from the beginning, on account of the scenes with Jennifer, leading some adherents to psychoanalysis to regard the show as a vindication of their ideas. One early champion, Ellen Willis (*Nation*, 2 April 2001), summarized a widespread opinion by calling *The Sopranos* "a serious battle for a man's soul, carried on in sessions that look and sound like the real thing," a latter-day morality play in which psychotherapeutic concepts have replaced Christian ones. "The murderous mobster," she continues, "is the predatory lust and aggression in all of us; the lies and cover-ups are ours; the therapist's fear is our own collective terror of peeling away those lies. The problem is that we can't live with the lies, either. So facing down the terror, a little at a time, becomes the only route to sanity, if not salvation." If Tony is not Gatsby, then maybe he is Everyman, or at any rate what Philip Rieff in his 1959 book *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* called "psychological man," who labors to gain "practical, experimental insight leading to the mastery of his own personality." In *The Psychology of the Sopranos: Love, Death, Desire, and Betrayal in America's Favorite Gangster Family* (Basic Books, 2002), the therapist Glen O. Gabbard reported on discussions with his colleagues and a positive assessment of Tony's potential to achieve this insight: "Because he experiences anxiety, depression, conflict and the capacity for guilt, a strong argument can be made that it is possible to make contact with his conscience and maybe to dissuade him from further violence."

The argument is demonstrably refuted, and all the hope confounded, in the final episodes. In episode 17, the editing of a series of scenes deserves attention. During a session with Jennifer, Tony laments his influence on A. J.: "My rotten fucking putrid genes have infected my son's soul!" In rehab for his addictions, Christopher (Michael Imperioli) tells a fellow patient: "give, give, give, it's all I ever do" (he will shortly commit a murder). Two mob infantrymen con a hardware-store sales assistant out of machine tools. Finally, A. J. himself visits a psychiatrist who prescribes him antidepressants. The scene in the store seems like a misfit but, on reflection, it works as a commentary on the others. Tony and Christopher are grifting too, putting on a show of tortured emotion. A. J. may be more authentically despondent, but he is getting into the same role-playing groove. The doctor asks him, "Does anything in life give you pleasure?" A. J.'s delayed answer near the end of the episode is a look of excitement as he assists friends torture a fellow student. For A. J. and Christopher therapy is a prelude to violence.

In case we missed it, the point is made didactically explicit in relation to Tony in the twentieth episode. Jennifer is

Tony's bloody hand. © 2007 Home Box Office

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The end of the affair. © 2007 Home Box Office

dining with colleagues who snidely discuss new research: "The talking cure actually helps [sociopaths] become better criminals." Afterwards we see Jennifer sitting up in bed reading the findings. Big close-ups of text from the article literally spell out the idea: "The criminal . . . uses insight . . . to justify . . . heinous acts." She is convinced. During her next appointment with Tony, she rebukes him for tearing a page from the waiting-room magazine and, deaf to his objections, dismisses him. He looks back at her spitefully from the corridor, holding up the offending page. Defiant in long shot, she shuts him out. In the U.K. DVD commentary to the scene, the actors enlisted for the task, Arthur J. Nascarella and Steve Van Zandt, digress in order to discuss the controversially abrupt climactic moments of the season, Van Zandt noting approvingly its variance from "the phoney Hollywood closure thing." No explanation of the change of subject is given, but what might this scene indeed have to do with the terminal shots?

Tony is in a diner. A. J. and Carmela (Edie Falco) join him. Another man enters and he sits at the counter before walking to the restroom. Meadow (Jamie-Lynn Sigler) rushes in and then there is a cut to a close-up of Tony. It is another version of the end-of-therapy scene in the previous episode, this time culminating in the reverse perspective. In the ultimate view we have of him, Tony is again looking back and we are in an identical position to Jennifer in her doorway. Like her, we have a last glimpse of a character who has not been changed, cured, or redeemed. It is time to desist, without fanfare or ceremony, from any hopeful longing that it is otherwise. And then, when the screen goes suddenly and decisively black, it is as if a door has closed on Tony.

Rob White

The last view of Tony. © 2007 Home Box Office

DVD DATA *The Sopranos: Season 6, Part II*. Various directors. © 2007 Home Box Office, Inc. and Samax, Inc. Publisher: HBO Video, 2007 (U.K.). £45.99, 5 discs.

AMERICAN MESS

Many viewers and reviewers rehearsed a familiar anxiety about Todd Haynes's fantasia on Bob Dylan, *I'm Not There*. *How much do you have to know*, going in, to be an ideal viewer of this film? Do you have be a lifelong fan, a Dylanologist, a child of the 1960s? A student of semiotics, as the director once was? The commercial movie industry is, as a rule, phobically scared of any film that demands prior knowledge—of culture, politics, history, world events, in fact just about anything. The niche market of those in-the-know about any topic that is deemed "specialist" is far too small to be of significance to large-scale capitalist enterprise. This market prefers to think of each audience member as a *tabula rasa*, empty of a past and of particular sophistications. Epic historical works by Oliver Stone or Ridley Scott strenuously reassure us: the film you are about to see will tell you everything you need to know about Queen Elizabeth, the Vietnam War, or the CIA—no need to swat up beforehand. And, over time, this industry attitude has been ruthlessly internalized by many viewers, who are wary or downright dismissive of any film that expects them to bring some prior education to the cinema-going experience: nobody who proudly considers himself or herself part of the mass of those "average moviegoers" likes to get a whiff of anything elitist, something that is not "for everyone" and hence excluding of them. Even Haynes, on the promotional trail, felt the need to play it safe on this point: the ideal viewer of *I'm Not There*, he advised, is someone who knows *nothing* about Dylan, who just goes with the flow . . .

Ken Jacobs's *Star Spangled to Death* (2004—see www.starspangledtodeath.com) poses the question of the make-up of its audience, indeed of every individual viewer, very starkly right up front. A mock trailer for the seven hours to follow begins with these words printed on the digital video screen: "Let's assume this movie is for you. This would mean you hardly stand a chance." At trailer's end—after some angry political analysis of the Bush administration—the text returns to this theme: "If this is a movie for you / I would commiserate / if I didn't think it would be worse / to be among the sheep." This is of course a dare, a provocation to every viewer: don't be a sheep, rise to the occasion of this movie! For me, it was an irresistible entrée to Jacobs's masterpiece.

Where *I'm Not There* makes it pretty easy for an audience to go with its flow, *Star Spangled to Death* offers no free pass whatsoever. It is not hard to scrabble up, from any recent magazine, newspaper, or website, some information about Dylan before (or after) seeing *I'm Not There*. After all, the film, with the pitch-perfect pastiche that Haynes has mastered since the late 1980s, plays to our possibly vague but inescapable familiarity with a vast repertoire of Dylanesque icons, emblems, famous scenes, historic moments. *Star Spangled to Death*, on the other hand, tells us exactly nothing (in a journalistic "backgrounding" way) about its central human subject—a figure (I presume) as iconic to Jacobs, and to a subculture of artists and critics around the world, as Dylan is to his rather larger fan base: filmmaker and performance artist extraordinaire, Jack Smith. If you don't know anything about Smith, the film seems to say, either get lost or get educated—and be ready to dig for that knowledge in places beyond a cover story in *Time* or an *American Masters* TV bio-doc like Martin Scorsese's *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan* (2005). That stance alone, in the face of Hollywood's valorization of the know-nothing posture, is revolutionary.

We do see a great deal of Smith—and several of his compatriots, especially Jerry Sims—during *Star Spangled*. "Jack Smith and Jerry Sims are truly odd," another of the film's written titles informs us—but, beyond that, we have to use our own eyes and ears to make any sense of who they were and what they did. We see them dancing in odd costumes, engaged in near-autistic ritual gestures, and we hear them talking, singing, babbling. (Naturally, those images and those sounds never go in sync.) This is the material that Jacobs began with, shot between 1956 and 1960, and finished with almost four decades later, and—since it is now a kind of fond memorial (although Jacobs, like many of Smith's collaborators, eventually had a hard time maintaining personal and creative relations with him)—the footage usually hits us in lyrical slow motion. Watching these images, as tantalizing and poetic as they are devoid of conventional documentation, many Dylanological themes in fact sprang to mind: especially the "old, weird America" beloved of Greil Marcus and Robert Crumb, that America conjured by songs on scratchy 78s, or ancient faded postcards.

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Jerry Sims pinches Ken Jacobs's cheek in *Star Spangled to Death.* © Ken Jacobs

But the relentlessly experimental spirit of Smith triggers other, higher-brow associations as well. Walter Benjamin, for instance, for whom (as his friend Siegfried Kracauer suggested in 1928) "knowledge arises out of ruins"—someone who "hardly ever tackles constructs and phenomena when they are in their prime, preferring instead to seek them out once they have entered the realm of the past," because alive they "seem jumbled like a dream," whereas "once they are in a state of disintegration they become clearer." Or French philosopher–psychoanalyst Félix Guattari, who in 1994 declared: "Look at the power of American culture to produce a more than tolerable and comfortable subjectivity, warm, passionate, exciting, in this pile of metal, this heap of shit, this load of stupidities. Isn't that really quite a feat?" Ruins, metal, shit: Dylan may have (as he proudly tells us in his autobiographical *Chronicles*) pilfered a rare blues album from a friend whenever his muse insisted, but Smith systematically went straight to the street, its refuse dumps and garbage cans, for his material. To watch *Star Spangled* is to be plunged back to the very origin of a "funk art" that created its magic from, literally, whatever junk was to hand, from what Guattari called "this American mess"—a true no-budget endeavor.

Another kind of cultural garbage—the found footage of forgotten science documentaries, newsreels, war propaganda shorts—takes up the lion's share of *Star Spangled*'s mammoth running time. Compared to the inspired magnifications, distortions, and reworkings that Jacobs frequently performs on his meticulously amassed archive of old photos, stereoscope slides, and motion-picture reels—see the splendid *New York Ghetto Fishmarket 1903* DVD (2006) and its bonus short, *The Surging Sea of Humanity*—here the samples are left whole and largely intact, save for some fairly discreet montage juxtapositions. Jacobs has commented that he expects these clips to "self-indict," that no commentary or analysis is really needed from him on their "load of stupidities." This expectation is a little naive; no film (or, indeed, any cultural object) naturally self-indicts for, if it did, it would never have held its ideological grip on anybody.

It is necessary to break that grip: this is the substance of Jacobs's dare, which is really a call for an avant-garde spectatorship, one that refuses to go with the flow, alert to the ways in which rationality in a found film like *Mother Love* (from the CBS *Conquest* series, "prepared in cooperation with The American Association for the Advancement of Science" in 1960) is a ghastly charade—an ode to the experimental imprisonment and manipulation of all-too-symbolic orphan monkeys. Uninterested in coaxing an audience toward his film or endorsing ignorance, Jacobs offers instead an experience that is in the nature of a revelation.

ADRIAN MARTIN is Senior Research Fellow in Film and TV Studies, Monash University, Australia.

DVD DATA *Star Spangled to Death.* Director: Ken Jacobs. © 2004 Ken Jacobs. Publisher: Tzadik, 2006. $70.00, 4 discs.

BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

Before the tremendous originality of Fassbinder's epochal film, the only honest response—still—is to gape and stammer. Small wonder that this admirable Criterion edition, albeit packed with supplements, lacks a commentary; the smooth-talking voice normally appointed to signify, with easy-going anecdotes and platitudinous background information, that a classic has been "classified"—sorted, digested, intellectually as well as digitally mastered—must have been struck dumb. Journalists have evinced a similar embarrassment around the film; though never allowed to be at a loss for words, they have channeled their facility elsewhere, into wiki-dissertations on Alfred Döblin's homonymous 1927 source novel, or familiar evocations of Weimar Germany, with its brownshirts and cabarets. One may suspect that the diffidence is being carried a bit too far when Dave Kehr, in the *New York Times*, dismisses Fassbinder's film in favor of Phil Jutzi's mawkish ninety-minute 1931 adaptation; or when Ian Buruma, in the *New York Review of Books*, reduces it to an occasion on which to plead for a new English translation of Döblin's Dos Passos pastiche, "brilliant and inventive enough to do justice to the text"! But even such aesthetic purblindness may be taken to prove the same point: *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is a film we don't yet know how to look at; in this respect, there might be something unpleasant and indeed repellent about the persistent demands it makes on our senses.

The inordinate length of the film (thirteen hour-long episodes with a two-hour epilogue) may suggest that we need the overviews provided by historical context or plot summary to guide us through it, but in fact nothing is less helpful than to superimpose upon the film's stylistic complexity—which is, after all, the thing to be looked at—the master narratives of History or the Novel. This is not because a historically situated narrative is lacking in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*—where, on the contrary, it takes the most legible generic form possible, that of melodrama—but because Fassbinder's cinematic style characteristically works at an off-angle to it. In virtually every image, there appears some perverse element—distracting, irrelevant, boringly emphatic—that refuses to serve the needs of the story, insists instead on leading, however inefficient or even counter-productive, a vehement life of its own. We need less to "place" the film, then, than to grasp its capacity for unsettling *us*, and it is by paying attention to these often annoying interferences that we best do so.

Let me begin with a frequent such interference, the garish neon light that flashes on and off in scene after scene (especially those in Franz's apartment, where the source of the pink radiance spasmodically bursting through the windows is never clarified). No doubt, this rather crude device produces a visual richness that remains broadly perceptible even on the small television screen for which *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was made. But it is hard not also to feel that its rapid, regular, mechanical rhythm overwhelms the subtler nuances, slower pace, and more varied actions of the human drama. Under different guises, such literally vibrant pulsation obtrudes nearly everywhere in the film. When we are not seeing it in a rotating fan or a teetering seesaw, fluttering leaves, flickering candles, or flashing lightning, then we are hearing it in sounds of ticking, dripping, buzzing, hammering, tweeting, or typing. Sometimes it is blatant, with each and every episode beginning under the aegis, visual and acoustic, of the chugging wheels of a train. And sometimes it is latent, a figure in the carpet: on the periphery of one scene, we may pick out a beggar's hand trembling up and down, up and down; in the background of another, we will discern a bird flying back and forth in its cage as if on a timer.

All this can hardly help getting on our nerves, rather as if, while we were trying to read or ruminate, we had developed a throbbing headache, or someone near us wouldn't stop mindlessly tapping his foot, or clicking a ballpoint. Much as, in episode 7, Franz becomes so disturbed by the

Franz's binge. © 2006 Bavaria Media GmbH

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The prolonged walk and the disconcerting clock. © 2006 Bavaria Media GmbH

ticking of a grandfather clock that he has to stop the pendulum, so we may often find ourselves wishing for an end to the stylistic tics that such ticking typifies. For underneath the full-bodied melodrama of the *Alexanderplatz*, Fassbinder seems to have set going a strange sort of metronome that makes us experience the film's length not as a richly novelistic accretion of characters and incidents, but as unalleviated duration, measured by a bare unmelodic beat without end. Detaching us from the narrative, this metronome, for all its quick drumming, is what makes the film feel so unnervingly slow. It dissolves the twists and turns of the plot into a suspense so sheer—because undefined (totally unlike Hitchcock's)—that we can hardly decide whether it heralds a deadly fate to come, or is itself that fate already at hand.

Merely annoying when it is extrinsic to the drama, the pulsing becomes more unsettling when we find it insinuated into the bodies, gestures, and voices of the *persons* of the drama, whom it seems, like an alien implant, to robotize from within. Our first shot of Franz introduces him, the very protagonist, less as a character with thoughts and feelings than as a *pace*. After a cursory head-on close-up, the shot does nothing but track him in profile as he walks—and walks and walks—along the prison courtyard, through accidents of light and shadow against a barely changing brick background. Over a minute long, it is an almost insanely extensive elaboration of a narrative action so minor that it is not even included in the source novel (whose first sentence already presupposes its accomplishment: "He stood in front of the Tegel Prison gate and was free now"). Franz's long, long walk is no journey to freedom, but rather, it already seems, the start of his subjugation by an enforced, inalterable, inhuman, and deadening repetition.

That stupefying prospect gets realized often enough in the *Alexanderplatz*, collapsing it into the kind of film in which "nothing happens." Betrayed by a fellow peddler, Franz goes on a monumental drinking binge during which he sets about emptying, one after another, crate after crate, an endless supply of identical beer bottles (episode 4). Later, after his

girlfriend Mieze disappears, he sits in his apartment in front of a phonograph, playing his favorite song to death (episode 13). Even the ostensibly picaresque variety of jobs he takes in his sworn effort to go straight—selling tie-holders, pornography, the Nazi newspaper, shoelaces—proves balefully monotonous; these quasi-con jobs are not much different from the petty crime and pimping into which they prepare his inevitable relapse. In all his dubious touting, one is particularly struck by the declamatory quality of his speech, whose singsong cadences give his utterances, from sales pitch to political rant to biblical quotation, the pumping rhythm of nursery rhymes—which he also sometimes declaims. It is as though, by embracing this rhythm, he were trying to comfort himself against the compulsive repetition of which it is, however, another index. (Similarly, during his binge, he rocks himself back and forth in his bed.) Franz's drone finds an openly noxious counterpart in Reinhold's stutter, the impediment that the villain of the piece, for his part, desperately seeks to overcome with his machinations. That is what "plot" generally amounts to in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Franz going straight or getting together with Mieze, Reinhold changing girlfriends): a doomed attempt to mute the beat that is at the heart of everything here, destroying sense and soul alike.

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The most disquieting vocal pulsation is Mieze's scream in episode 11 ("Two Surprises"). *Berlin Alexanderplatz* does not want for calamities, but this ululation troubles us more than any of them, Mieze's own murder included. And yet, in the very exorbitance of its intensity, it bears so vague a relation to the story that, though a supremely memorable moment, it is quite naturally forgotten in every précis. Its rather absurd narrative setting, in any case, may remind us more of *commedia all'italiana* than high tragedy. Smug, simple-minded Franz wishes to give Reinhold, incapable of staying with any woman for long, an object lesson in the value and art of loving relationship. He takes him home and hides him in his bed, where he may secretly observe the enviable picture of domestic happiness to unfold when Mieze returns. But Mieze returns with news Franz has not foreseen: she has met a young man—yes, she's in love with him! Ferocious with hurt and shame, Franz beats her and throws Reinhold, sheepishly emerging from the covers, out the door. And now, standing alone in the room, Mieze commences her great, harrowing aria: an uncontrollable oscillating shriek that, renewed with every breath she takes, perseveres to what feels like the span of an entire cantata. (It lasts a full minute, an unprecedented length in cinema.) Though the pink neon persists in flashing through the windows, and a birdcage swings violently overhead, there is for once no danger that this background interference will distract from the dramatic action, which simply consists in intensifying it exponentially, to the point that it no longer makes sense even to speak of action: the scream has arrested it altogether.

Only a short while before in the same scene, Mieze had wailed under Franz's brutal blows; he paid no attention to those cries, which hardly could be thought to require an explanation. But this scream terrifies him with a violence all the more dreadful in that it appears to him to be without cause. Huddled with Reinhold at the door and wide-eyed with fright, he demands, "Why are you screaming like that?" We too might pose that question. For Mieze has not screamed like that when Franz was beating her, nor will she scream like that even when Reinhold is about to kill her. We see Mieze in a static long shot in which, like Franz at the beginning, she shows only an inscrutable, soul-concealing profile. The remote visual treatment—Haneke *avant la lettre*—only further heightens the floating quality of our immediate aural intimacy with the scream itself. In the very genre of transparent feeling that is melodrama, Fassbinder has produced a blatant psychic intensity with no equally obvious corresponding meaning. The film's expressive high point is, in fact, a passionate *reticence*; in refusing to show its reasons, the scream multiplies the valences of its painful affectivity all over the place. At once under- and overmotivated, it becomes wildly enigmatic; because nothing directly accounts for it, everything obliquely might.

No doubt, the discovery of Reinhold in Franz's bed has set Mieze off. That Franz beat her may only prove that he can't bear losing her to another man, but that he beat her in front of Reinhold reveals a far more horrible state of affairs in which the real Couple is elsewhere, formed not by her and Franz, as even being battered by him she might still imagine, but by Franz and Reinhold, men who are using her in the no-longer-quite-unconscious gesturing of their love for one another. Does Mieze believe she was about to be "swapped" between them, the latest piece of goods in the female-trading that, Reinhold has told her earlier, the friends practice together? Would she be then bewailing the structural pain, physical and psychic, suffered by all women in the gender/sex system that subordinates them not only to men, but also to the affective bond between them? Though Mieze has only been introduced in episode 8, her scream has been "waiting to happen" almost from the beginning, as if it were the unthrottled version of a ubiquitous female scream, one previously silenced or curtailed by Franz when it rose to the lips of Ida (about to be beaten to death), Minna (about to be raped) or Cilly (about to be abandoned).

But in giving voice to the long line of his cruelly abused women, Mieze's scream does something else besides. Agon-

ized, it is also agonizing, inflicting no small part of the screamer's pain on whoever finds it, as we say, painful to hear. There is no way of reckoning how many men have sobbed in unmanned sympathy with Mieze, finding their own pain revealed in hers, but there is at least one: Franz himself. "You're screaming the whole house down," he declares, as if she were realizing his earlier fear that "the roofs might begin to swing and shake . . . slip down like sand." Mieze's scream has brought

Mieze's scream. © 2006 Bavaria Media GmbH

Franz's howls. © 2006 Bavaria Media GmbH

home to him the pain of his own psychosocial doom—a doom that had been sufficiently indicated to him by the prison, the delinquent milieu, his Zolian alcoholism, and finally his missing limb, but that he had been attempting to elude by, among other stratagems, transposing it onto his women; in his violent or humiliating treatment of them, he could think of himself as the very agent of the pounding fate that cowed him in the rest of his social relations. But now, all of a sudden, he finds himself emitting antiphonal howls as he joins Mieze and the whole chorus of female figures behind her in that "shrieking of women" from which he once observed that a man liked to cut and run.

To halt his own sobbing, he attempts *to suffocate Mieze*, as if he could silence her as he did the clock. But in the process, he becomes clockwork himself: "Ich! Bring'! Dich! Um!" ("I'll kill you"), he intones while striking her, a stupid giant beating out his "Fee! Fie! Foe! Fum!" There is no escaping the unstoppable pressure of that pulse of which Mieze's scream offers not only an instance, but also a tragic recognition. The film ends with Franz unleashing a howl that, half manic laugh, half manic sob, is drawn out even longer than Mieze's. His face, already blocked by the birdcage, gets covered with a succession of end credits in what amounts to a brazen act of tagging: "This image belongs to Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*." If a deathly pulsation is at work in Franz's world, then what has been meant by it, and what has been unmeant, is finally epitomized as the film's own style, with its maddening flicker of impediments. In the presence of this unsparing style, it is no wonder, if we are not, like Franz, to howl back, that we still shrink from taking its measure.

D. A. MILLER is John F. Hotchkis Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley.

DVD DATA *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980). Director: Rainer Werner Fassbinder. © 2006 Bavaria Media GmbH. Publisher: Criterion Collection, 2007. $124.95, 7 discs. (U.K. publisher: Second Sight. £54.99, 6 discs.)

UNEARTHING THE FOUNDATIONS OF CINEMA STUDIES

KEVIN JACK HAGOPIAN

With *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginnings of the U.S. Study of Film*, Dana Polan has provided American Cinema Studies with its long-awaited archaeology. Cinema Studies was the bastard offspring of many parents; among the most significant contributions of this essential institutional history is the naming of so many of them. And what we learn is this: Cinema Studies' modern disciplinary instability is the product, at least in part, of an ancestral struggle over the politics of mass culture in the academy.

Polan's masterly study covers the years 1915–35. Present at the creation were universities, art museums, progressive educators, anthropologists, Hollywood publicists, and a covey of New York Left intellectuals. The disputatious landscape they carved out remains with us, an irreconcilable set of fascinations with the industrial mechanics of movie production, the psychology of perception, the place of popular culture in the social formation of identity groups, enthusiastic but intellectually casual zeitgeist analysis, and earnest thematic readings. In Polan's narrative, competing ideological positions seek a primitive hegemony over an art form whose popularity on its own, and whose secondary cultural sweep, can scarcely be imagined today; in the years of this study, the movies were a monumental cultural and social fact. That very popularity required address by the institutions then charged with explaining culture. Much of early film pedagogy was an attempt to contain the cultural efflorescence of the cinema, and the subversive social potential that went with it, within the confines of existing disciplines. But Polan also reveals an impulse toward liberation and anti-discipline in the youth of Cinema Studies, a spirit of salmagundi which, while it has often proved toxic to the discipline's progress in the academy, speaks to a certain blessed anarchy of method that makes the venture, whatever it is, worth doing for so many of us.

In a deft move at setting Cinema Studies in a larger history of ideas, Polan fuses the study of film to the growth of middlebrow cultural interlocutors in the 1920s and 1930s. At this time, the multiple possibilities of understanding cinema encouraged the interventions of a cadre of professional cultural translators. Polan's case study of middlebrow is the now-archaic Great Books movement, a genteel conspiracy which held that the middle class could be educated to classical values if given popular venues and the right instruction.

Middlebrow culture has been ably documented by Janice Radway in *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month-Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999) and Joan Shelley Rubin in *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 1992). They have shown that it was one of the most characteristic of twentieth-century public intellectual modes, exemplified in print and on radio by intellectual gadflies like Gilbert Seldes and Mortimer Adler. Paradoxically, while middlebrow was in fact a reassertion of cultural mastery by an elite, it was also a sustained and often genuine opening to mass culture by that elite. Seldes, for instance, trumpeted the Hollywood cinema as a cultural form that was both popular *and* artistic, and moreover a manifestation of American national character. Adler, in his monumental theory of popular cinema contained in the obscurely named 1937 tome *Art and Prudence: A Study in Practical Philosophy*, ascribed both autonomy and erudition to mass audiences. This compound claim enabled contemporary entrepreneurial academics such as St. John's College dean Scott Buchanan to justify the presence of non-traditional, popular culture material in the curriculum. Middlebrow's use of metaphors to link the new, lively arts with the inherited cultural standing of the staid, Aristotelian ones—Adler called the movies "the theatre of democracy," and films themselves "[democracy's] most popular poetry"—offered a perversely catholic range of disciplinary settings and ideological stances out of which movies could be taught, from sociology to literature, journalism to engineering. At St. John's, then in the process of institutionalizing the Great Books as the basis of the curriculum it re-

Film Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 1, pps 78–79, ISSN 0015-1386, electronic ISSN 1533-8630. © 2007 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions website, http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintinfo.asp. DOI: 10.1525/FQ.2008.61.3.78

tains today, the advantage of film, both pedagogically and philosophically, was its possibility as an intellectual *agora*, a cultural space of contemporary relevance where the many facets of the integrated liberal-arts curriculum could find application. Such a space was one in which specialization would perforce be impossible; Buchanan never envisioned the separate study of cinema, but saw cinema as a common ground on which multiple intellectual approaches might converge. In contrast to the Frankfurt School view of cinemagoers as lobotomized/duped shopgirls, the middlebrow view emphasized cinema as a democratic art—a convenient view for Hollywood, which welcomed the label of middle-class respectability that attention by well-known figures such as Seldes and Adler conferred. A tour de force, Polan's account of middlebrow and film education excavates a key foundation of the modern culture wars. It is an essential chapter in the archeology of American Cultural Studies.

Polan also pays attention to key individual practitioners —such as Syracuse University's Sawyer Falk—who taught Cinema Appreciation from the early 1930s to1961, supplementing cultural histories with case studies of individuals and the institutional changes they underwent together. Polan rediscovers a figure who was once, and too briefly, film education's tubercular colossus. Harry Alan Potamkin died young in 1933, and his contribution to film education and theory is nearly forgotten today, but Polan graphically shows how his struggle to reconcile progressive politics with aesthetic criticism made his treatment of film history and technique a laboratory for the study of contending forces within societies. Potamkin may well have been the first American theorist to deploy a sustained political and economic argument in order to present Hollywood as a media industry, even as he argued for a practical workers' film movement which might use the medium to break not merely the cultural hold of the classes on the masses, but eventually the economic grip as well. Potamkin, in Polan's subtle account, is an example of a committed intellectual, dreaming of social change rather than tenure.

Scenes of Instruction is meticulously researched and documented. Polan has consulted several archival collections, particularly those of the first college professors to bring film into the academy. The syllabuses, administrative memos, course notes, and even grade sheets—we learn that Maya Deren received a "B" in Cinema Appreciation—to which Polan pays such close attention provide vivid snapshots of a discipline searching for itself (a search that continues to this day). This is theoretically nuanced cultural history at its most mature, its claims about the politics of culture fully developed and substantiated, rather than merely signalled by constant appeals to authority. Polan makes us see the struggle of various paradigms to assert ownership over the study of film in its formative years. In fact, it is Polan's hard-earned expertise as a student of texts and cultural correspondences, which was first fully apparent in his study of 1940s cinema, *Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative and the American Cinema, 1940–50* (Columbia University Press, 1990), that allows him to understand these paradigms not as free-floating philosophies, but as specific conditions of the production of knowledge at a given historical moment.

Scenes of Instruction offers a grounded, materialist history of education in the study of film, and then presents the complex relation of that education to the commercial motion picture's drive toward middle-class respectability. This is institutional history animated by a concern with the actual mechanisms by which cultural value is assigned in our society. Rewriting the politically heroic narrative of Cinema Studies' supposed origins in the late 1960s, Polan shows that in fact Cinema Studies grew up with cinema. Polan draws our attention to how the discipline's formative moment previewed the way in which "academic inquiry both demarcates itself from, and yet frequently mixes with, non-scholarly modes of popular knowledge" (7). For Polan, the site-specific nature of this mixing is critical: more than nearly every other historian of academia, Polan credits the classroom teacher as a major source of disciplinary power. He seeks to "establish the identity of those who taught film, how they went about it, what presuppositions they started with, how their courses originated, and what they intended to accomplish" (21).

By infusing the elite culture of the academy with the popular culture of movies and moviegoing in actual classrooms and from many ideological angles, early scholars may well have left the most genuine of political legacies to Cinema Studies. Their insistence on engagement with the public sphere of film in a myriad of ways meant that the discipline would always be complicated by the real experiences and economies of film and its audiences, and that it would never be free to discipline itself, leisurely and abstractly, within the cloisters of the academy. This fine book shows that the current debate over the future, with its fruitless search for a Kuhnian paradigm and its blood feuds between competing grand narratives, was first entered into long ago, albeit gently, by the first film scholars. We are living in the intellectual future they wondered about.

KEVIN JACK HAGOPIAN teaches at the Pennsylvania State University.

BOOK DATA Dana Polan, *Scenes of Instruction: The Beginnings of the U.S. Study of Film*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. $60.00 cloth; $24.95 paper. 416 pages.

JOANNE BERNARDI

The Cinema of Gosho Heinosuke: Laughter Through Tears by Arthur Nolletti, Jr.

In this first sizable English language study of the director Heinosuke Gosho (1902–81), Arthur Nolletti provides close textual readings of sixteen (out of at least forty extant) titles and an appendix with summaries of three more. Steadily active—if eclectically—for four decades, Gosho is best known for *The Neighbor's Wife and Mine* (1931), Japan's first successful "all-talkie"; *The Dancing Girl of Izu* (1933), arguably the apex of the 1930s "pure literature" adaptations; and *Where Chimneys are Seen* (1953), a rare contemporary drama screened abroad during the "exotic export" wave of the 1950s. Gosho's films today are elusive. Some have been released on DVD or VHS in Japan, but only *Where Chimneys are Seen* is readily available online. None is (or, to my knowledge, ever has been) similarly distributed in the U.S., and this in itself makes Nolletti's study worthwhile.

Admittedly preoccupied with Gosho's "humanism," Nolletti is candid about his auteurist approach. Gosho "helped create the classical humanist tradition in Japanese film" but "rarely shied away from sentimentality, even when it was excessive, and . . . his critics faulted him for it" (243). The subtitle refers to "Goshoism," a term Donald Richie and Joseph Anderson attributed early on to Japanese film critics describing a style inducing laughter and tears at the same time. In recuperating Gosho's legacy, Nolletti focuses on those elements of Gosho's style (both in his films and in his life stance) that he most highly esteems. Although noting that Gosho would "[d]oubtless . . . be the first to admit that he made too many films, and that too many of them were failures" (243), Nolletti only alludes to such failures and attendant criticism. Instead, he presents what might be described best as a type of philological appreciation of Gosho the "intuitive artist" (112). He quotes Gosho as saying, for example, that "the purpose of a film director's life is to describe the real life around him and create works which express the true feelings of human beings," and to create films that "touch the emotions of the audience and touch them deeply" (84). This seems the perfect set-up for an unapologetic hagiography, but Nolletti's recuperative attention to specific films undeniably provides opportunities for further research.

Nolletti's argument hinges on his opinion that Gosho believed human relationships were the fundamental fabric of life. Apparently serving as a moral anchor throughout his career, this conviction also imparted an overall sense of assurance, stability, and coherence to his work. Described as a chronological, "developmental" study, the book probes Gosho's relationship to his mode of choice, the *shomin-geki*, in the first seven chapters. Historically familiar to us today as Ozu's mainstay and Shochiku's trademark, the *shomin-geki* is invariably described here as "the drama of the everyday lives of the lower-middle classes" (13) or the "slice-of-life" drama (often prefaced with "bourgeois"). This description, however, glosses over the *shomin-geki*'s muddled class distinctions, since the term "middle class" covers a great deal of ground.

Chapter 1 prepares for subsequent chapters with a discussion of the *shomin-geki* as the "base from which Gosho worked throughout his entire career" (13), rendering it his own through a process of reformulation, blending, and reconfiguration with other genres (8), or "re-imagining and reshaping . . . many of the genre's basic ingredients" (10). A subsequent discussion of three "nonsense" comedies (including *The Neighbor's Wife and Mine*) identifies Gosho's *shomin-geki* (a mélange of "comedy, farce, and drama" [9]) as the progenitor of "Goshoism" before segueing into a more comprehensive analysis of *The Burden of Life* (1933). One of Gosho's better-known films, this is a "marked advance" (30) over Gosho's previous comedies and an opportunity for him to further develop that facet of his style informed by character-centered "slice-of-life" comedy.

Chapter 1 also invites us to take a closer look at the conventions and defining structure of the *shomin-geki*, and its stylistic and ideological significance. This provokes lingering questions. For example, even if we acknowledge the wide range of styles accommodated by the *shomin-geki* (13), and its ideologically "highly protean" (14) nature and "remarkably unified" (13) form (quoting Noel Burch), what, or more precisely, who qualifies as *shomin*? Does this ambiguity warrant deeper consideration? Should (and can) we more precisely identify what Nolletti so often calls "life's contradictions"? Or, is accepting such ambiguities the fundamental condition for—and the key to—*shomin-geki* consumption? Recurrent references to "the plight of women," "the treatment of women," the "oppression of women," and "the downtrodden" are equally opaque. Our questions are ultimately either mitigated by or symptomatic of (depending on your inclination) Nolletti's humanist agenda.

Chapter 2 considers Gosho's contributions to the "pure literature" movement and the 1930s "pure literature" film adaptation through an analysis of *Dancing Girl of Izu* (1933). The discussion of *Woman of the Mist* (1936) in chapter 3

expands on previously published work. In chapter 4, Gosho's wartime activity, his participation in post-war "Democratization" and the Toho Labor strikes, and his interest in romanticism foreground an analysis of *Once More* (1947). Nolletti is at his most persuasive in his treatments of *Where Chimneys are Seen* (1953) and *An Inn at Osaka* (1954) in chapters 6 and 7, and his discussion of the latter film is especially compelling. Chapter 8 (Gosho's career in the late 1950s) leads up to a final chapter on the 1960s, when Gosho made a dozen films "alternating between romantic melodramas and *shomin-geki*" during the final eight years of his career (213). These titles are the least familiar, but their descriptions pique our interest.

No single study, particularly one this consistently focused on a discussion of human experience, single-handedly compensates for the previous neglect of such a prolific career. This wide-ranging study is a welcome addition to Japanese film scholarship in English nevertheless. © 2008 Joanne Bernardi

JOANNE BERNARDI is Associate Professor of Japanese at the University of Rochester, and the author of *Writing in Light: The Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement* (Wayne State University Press, 2001).

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STEPHEN PRINCE

Waiting on the Weather: Making Movies with Akira Kurosawa by Teruyo Nogami

The auteur theory has always gotten it wrong—great directors do not work alone. They depend on exceptional collaborators, such as Teruyo Nogami. For more than forty years, she worked closely with Kurosawa as a continuity assistant, assistant producer, and production manager. Now she has given us the first inside account of "the Kurosawa group" and how it made such extraordinary pictures as *Rashomon* (1950), *Ikiru* (1952), *Seven Samurai* (1954), and *Ran* (1985).

This exemplary memoir showcasing Nogami's devotion to Kurosawa and to the art of cinema is a treasure trove filled with passionate, funny, wry, and incisive portraits of a golden age in Japanese film. Nogami's nostalgia for this period and its filmmakers is deeply moving, and she writes about the Kurosawa group with exquisite feeling and a ripe melancholy that all those to whom she was once close are now gone.

What will prove irresistible to Kurosawa devotees are her sketches of the director—no previous account has brought him to life in such personal terms. Nogami gives us a Kurosawa boisterously leading his company in song during evening dinners on location and weeping in frustration as the problems piled up on the set of *Dersu Uzala* (1975). She writes about how Kurosawa, a rising star flush with the success of *Stray Dog* (1949), descended on Daiei Studios in 1950 to make *Rashomon*. With his entourage, "Kurosawa swept into the studios with all the grandeur of the rising sun" (67), and all the workers at Daiei rushed to their windows to catch a glimpse of this superstar, exclaiming about how tall he was. "Just walking around, he and the others exuded a kind of overawing vitality" (ibid.).

She recounts the two disastrous fires that nearly destroyed the negative of *Rashomon* and highlights the innovative collaboration between Kurosawa and cinematographer Kazuo Miyagawa on that film. She reveals how production designer Yoshiro Muraki built the castle in *Ran* that was put to the torch. Consisting only of front and side walls, its foundation—ostensibly of stone—was actually made from Styrofoam, coated in concrete and painted to look like ancient rocks. She points out that all of the flashback scenes during the funeral in *Ikiru* were originally scored with music, and how anguished composer Fumio Hayasaka became when Kurosawa decided that the music must go.

Kurosawa eventually became a bit of a dilettante about music, and Nogami shows that his tendency to tell composers how to write their scores led to huge fights which drove Masaru Sato off *Kagemusha* (1985) and Toru Takemitsu off *Ran* (Takemitsu eventually reconciled with Kurosawa and returned to the production).

Nogami describes Kurosawa's immense risk-taking, which typically paid off handsomely. The climax of *Kagemusha*, for example, featured a battlefield littered with the bodies of 130 horses that had been anesthetized, giving Kurosawa only thirty minutes to shoot the scene before the drug wore off and the horses revived.

Some of the book's most moving passages are those where Nogami describes the travails they faced filming *Dersu Uzala* during a harsh Siberian winter, shooting outdoors at forty below zero. At a bad place in his career, Kurosawa's nerves were frayed; he became short-tempered and consumed a bottle of vodka each evening. The travails even threatened a rupture in their relationship, but Nogami's devotion remained undimmed, and she seems especially proud of this film.

The book includes warm and colorful portraits of actors Takashi Shimura, Toshiro Mifune, Kamatari Fujiwara; production designer Muraki; cinematographers Asakazu Nakai and Kazuo Miyagawa; composers Hayasaka, Sato and Takemitsu; and first-hand accounts of Kurosawa's meetings with

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John Ford, Martin Scorsese, Jean Renoir, Sidney Lumet, and other great filmmakers. The accounts of Ford are especially interesting because they suggest that he returned in kind the deep respect that he received from Kurosawa.

All things must end, and the loveliest passages of the book detail Nogami's emotional leave-taking of the collaborators she had come to love. She writes of Toshiro Mifune at the end of his life, of Masaru Sato's sudden collapse at a party honoring his career, of the death of her first film mentor, director Mansaku Itami, and of the death of his son, Juzo Itami. And she describes coming home late at night and finding on her answering machine a flurry of increasingly urgent calls from Kurosawa's family, entreating her to come immediately to see Akira. She writes that she tore out of her house and over to the Kurosawa residence, but it was too late. After years in bed as an invalid, he had died.

Fumio Hayasaka wrote lyrics to the main theme from *Seven Samurai*, and Kurosawa was especially fond of singing them—"He who was seen yesterday is no more today / He who is seen today will be gone tomorrow / Unaware that tomorrow is his last / How sad he is today."

Nogami's portrait of her years with the Kurosawa group does not offer comprehensive coverage of all nineteen films that she worked on. Her portraits are selective; at the same time, they are passionate, informative, and poetic. Her book is the testimony of a life spent in devotion to an ideal of cinema and to the accomplishments of its greatest practitioners. Kurosawa's era is gone, but Nogami's pages, like the films themselves, will help to keep it alive. © 2008 Stephen Prince

STEPHEN PRINCE is the author of *The Warrior's Camera: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa* (Princeton University Press, 1999).

BOOK DATA Teruyo Nogami, *Waiting on the Weather: Making Movies with Akira Kurosawa.* Preface by Donald Richie. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2006. $24.95 paper. 304 pages.

DEAN A. HOFFMAN

What Ever Happened to Orson Welles? A Portrait of an Independent Career by Joseph McBride

Despite the cult of personality that has surrounded Orson Welles throughout most of the previous half century, one largely made up of equal parts *Schadenfreude* over his prolonged periods of relative inactivity and bemusement toward his emblematic obesity, he has rarely been perceived within the American post-war generation's sensibilities as a justly failed autodidact or polymath actor–writer–director—neither the erstwhile "one-man band" of his latter-day European fan base nor the overreaching wunderkind who tweaked the WPA with *The Cradle Will Rock* and unnerved the nation with *War of the Worlds*, only to be decisively put back into his place by William Randolph Hearst, whose reputation he had deconstructed in *Citizen Kane* (1941).

Rather, Welles has been a more enigmatic figure owing to his septuagenarian notoriety in Hollywood throughout the late 1970s, holding court at his customary table at Ma Maison and on television talk-show panels, indefinitely rationalizing the non-completion of his final feature, "The Other Side of the Wind." Literally monolithic in his waning years, Welles's very presence seemed to beg the title of Joseph McBride's assessment of his anomalous post-*Kane* career, *What Ever Happened to Orson Welles?*

The insightful work-in-progress on Welles begun by Simon Callow—*The Road to Xanadu* (1995), *Hello Americans* (2006)—estimates him, on the basis of his diverse and erratic achievement during this awkward transition, as a potentially tragic figure. Contrastingly, the lack of critical distance that characterizes McBride's book all too predictably consigns it to the growing stack of defensive, even sycophantic treatments of Welles's career, a trend which reached its nadir with Clinton Heylin's sophomoric *Despite the System: Orson Welles versus the Hollywood Studios* (Chicago Review Press, 2005).

A manifest weakness here is McBride's continual invocation of his friendship with Welles (thanks to McBride's experience as a minor cast member in "The Other Side"). Ill-focused and anecdotal, this self-referential form, which proved so distracting in the Welles biographies of Barbara Leaming (Viking, 1985) and David Thomson (Knopf, 1996), essentially compromises McBride's attempt at a coherent perspective. One is tempted to charge the author—like Peter Bogdanovich, another Welles crony boasting a costarring role in the film—with being too close to his subject, yet the difficulty remains of ascertaining exactly whether Welles or the author himself merits this distinction.

Indeed, the heavy presence throughout this volume of Welles's courtiers—Bogdanovich, cameraman Gary Graver, and Welles's companion and executor Oja Kodar—proves a poor substitute for an articulation of Welles's cinematic ideology during this period. In his opening chapters, McBride hastily and grudgingly acknowledges Welles's procrastination and avoidance of completion, and retrospectively blames the studio system for the failure in 1942 to finish *It's All True*. His vestigial leftism compels him to demonstrate that Welles was effectually blacklisted by the FBI for his progressivism, resulting in his inability to maintain support for his various

John Ford, Martin Scorsese, Jean Renoir, Sidney Lumet, and other great filmmakers. The accounts of Ford are especially interesting because they suggest that he returned in kind the deep respect that he received from Kurosawa.

All things must end, and the loveliest passages of the book detail Nogami's emotional leave-taking of the collaborators she had come to love. She writes of Toshiro Mifune at the end of his life, of Masaru Sato's sudden collapse at a party honoring his career, of the death of her first film mentor, director Mansaku Itami, and of the death of his son, Juzo Itami. And she describes coming home late at night and finding on her answering machine a flurry of increasingly urgent calls from Kurosawa's family, entreating her to come immediately to see Akira. She writes that she tore out of her house and over to the Kurosawa residence, but it was too late. After years in bed as an invalid, he had died.

Fumio Hayasaka wrote lyrics to the main theme from *Seven Samurai*, and Kurosawa was especially fond of singing them—"He who was seen yesterday is no more today / He who is seen today will be gone tomorrow / Unaware that tomorrow is his last / How sad he is today."

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projects, a questionable notion that McBride fervently preaches without conclusive evidence, only to abandon in favor of more tedious schmoozing with the nomadic cast and crew of "The Other Side."

Just as Welles, having discovered his métier as an independent filmmaker after the failure of both *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) and *Journey into Fear* (1943), ostensibly lacked the discipline to delineate and complete a major project of consequence amid a plethora of ideas and half-baked proposals throughout this retrograde period, McBride seems equally unable or unwilling to provide a tenable view of Welles's artistic ethos, careering wildly from one unfinished character sketch to another, leaving the reader with a forum as littered with tawdry mementos as Charles Foster Kane's cellar, and ultimately failing to discount Welles's growing reputation for profligacy.

Most disturbingly, *What Ever Happened to Orson Welles?* does nothing to dispel the general public conviction that Welles, by the time he began "The Other Side," had for all intents and purposes squandered his creative capital so thoroughly that this film—like most of his latter-day efforts in general—had lost any discernible thread of narrative coherence or thematic integrity, a suspicion all but confirmed in McBride's account by the bewildered and noncommittal response to the rough cut by potential executive producers Oliver Stone and George Lucas, who inarticulately dismissed the work as "uncommerical."

McBride also offers virtually nothing about Welles's sensible recourse in his later years to his singular voice, an attribute whose very intangibility situated and defined him on the cultural margins. At once redolent of sensuality, wit, and authority, this disarming presence in the occasional voice-over seemed to recall radio's golden age even as it heralded imminent creative controversy. Yet without reference to this highly marketable talent, McBride manages to observe that Welles's notorious shilling for Paul Masson wines—his definitive self-discredit for most Welles scholars—provided him annual revenues of over half a million dollars, belying the author's conceit of Welles's lack of private resources to make films, and that his pompousness and public scorn of the sponsor eventually led to his replacement by John Gielgud. Like his "Other Side" counterpart Jake Hannaford, the aged Welles in McBride's telling appears feckless in his inability to sustain a single creative endeavor.

To answer the question posed by McBride's title, one must look forward to the far more consistent and nuanced work of Simon Callow, whose depth of analysis may very well result in a four-volume historiography encompassing an eventual exploration of the genesis and execution of "The Other Side." But if Callow continues to demonstrate the critical perspective that has so far allowed him to juxtapose Welles's artistry with his undeniable compulsion toward self-destruction without undermining his enduring reputation as cinema's most innovative auteur, Joseph McBride with *What Ever Happened to Orson Welles?* has unwittingly fulfilled the self-parodic figure which he reportedly plays in Welles's unseen work—endlessly trailing after his idol and fawning on his every gesture, yet ultimately failing to reveal any particular justification for his presence. © 2008 Dean A. Hoffman

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RODNEY HILL

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Given the relative dearth of serious academic writing on Stanley Kubrick (especially considering the volumes upon volumes devoted to his work), Geoffrey Cocks's book is welcome, but the book's central claim is one that even the most devoted of Kubrick aficionados may find difficult to swallow, mush less digest: that Kubrick's *oeuvre*—and *The Shining* (1980) in particular—is an "indirect treatment of the Holocaust" (220).

Cocks's overall strategy is rather like that of a stage magician who teases us with a preview of his biggest, most amazing illusion at the onset of the show—only to leave the apparatus draped in shadow at the rear of the stage as he performs numerous lesser, though often impressive, feats leading up to the big finale. Cocks's argument wavers between careful, theoretically grounded analysis and historical contextualization on the one hand, and strained sleight-of-hand on the other. Still, by the end we are ready to accept that *The Shining* (1980) arguably *may be* about the Holocaust—but with the very important caveat that the film is also about a lot of other big ideas (history and American capitalism, for example, as Frederic Jameson argues so well in his 1981 essay, "Historicism in *The Shining*").

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Regardless of one's theoretical and methodological leanings, Cocks cannot be faulted for his appropriation of Freudian models to analyze *The Shining* and Kubrick's other films. It is widely known that Kubrick and co-scenarist Diane Johnson read Freud's essay on the uncanny as they prepared to adapt Stephen King's novel to the screen. Furthermore, Kubrick's interest in psychology is evident throughout his work, from *Lolita* (1962) to *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), from *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) to *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999).

However, Cocks overreaches at times, often falling into the seductive trap of trying to psychoanalyze Stanley Kubrick the man—despite never having met him—through his films. To take just one example, Cocks makes far too much of the coincidence in name between the character of the father in *The Shining*, Jack, and Kubrick's father, a physician named Jacques, suggesting that the film is partially a working out of Kubrick's Oedipal hostility towards his father. No evidence is offered for the existence of such animosity other than the assumption that all men harbor resentment towards their fathers. Cocks even goes so far as to suggest that the nickname given to the character of Danny, "Doc," alludes to "the doctor that Stanley did not become" (211), i.e., a desire on the part of Jacques Kubrick for his son to follow in his own career path. (We should note that both Danny's nickname and the name of his father originate in King's novel.) This line of interpretation, combined with the story element of a frustrated writer (Kubrick himself was a writer of screenplays) and other factors, leads Cocks to conclude that *The Shining* is Kubrick's "most autobiographical" (220) film. (We might more accurately describe it as Kubrick's least non-autobiographical film, since none is particularly autobiographical.)

Similar problems arise when Cocks attempts to make direct connections between film history and Kubrick's work. For example: Kubrick has stated in interviews that he saw films regularly as a child and teenager; thence, Cocks makes the leap that if a particular film (Fritz Lang's anti-Nazi *Ministry of Fear* [1944], for example) played in the Bronx in the 1940s or early 1950s, then Kubrick most likely saw it, and moroever it must have impacted his outlook on the Holocaust.

While such unfettered speculations can be maddening, fortunately they are offset by a good deal of careful analysis of Kubrick's films, especially *The Shining*. Certainly, anyone who admires Kubrick will agree that his films are packed with meaningful background details, which are easily "overlooked" on casual viewing but which connect outward to multiple possible meanings upon more careful consideration. In one exemplary passage, Cocks offers a thoroughgoing examination of Kubrick's musical choices for *The Shining* and the relevance of each particular piece (and its composer) to German history and the two world wars.

It is in such cases that Cocks's proficiency as an historian (he is not a film scholar per se) shines through most brilliantly. Despite its problems, *The Wolf at the Door* is an intriguing, often insightful exploration of the work of one of the twentieth century's most important artists. © 2008 Rodney Hill

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PHILOSOPHY

JENNIFER PRANOLO

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The question that structures Christian Keathley's timely book, *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees*, is how to systematically inject the cinephile's "ebullient spirit" (4) into academic Film Studies. Cinephilia itself has become a catchword lately, with anthologies like Adrian Martin and Jonathan Rosenbaum's *Movie Mutations: The Changing Face or World Cinephilia* (BFI, 2003) and *Cinephilia: Movies,*

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Love, and Memory (Amsterdam University Press, 2005), edited by Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener, out in recent years. For Keathley, however, the heyday of cinephilia (1945–68) has passed. He meticulously outlines cinephilia as a historical formation as well as a potential new paradigm for film historiography and criticism. Beyond the enthusiast's passion, cinephilia, according to Keathley, is ultimately a productive form of nostalgia. In the longing inspired by the flash of what Keathley calls the highly affective "cinephiliac moment," the cinephile is often moved to investigate the wider history behind the evolving reception of a film. Indeed, the palpable nostalgia that colors the book, from the subtly effusive writing to the stills from a dozen auteur classics scattered throughout, proves Keathley's commitment to practicing what he preaches. The result is an accessible and informative survey of cinephilia's rise and fall primarily in the context of post-World War II France.

Keathley's founding thesis is that cinephilia designates a discourse of excess. The unexpected look, the marginal detail, or the sudden gesture can constitute a unique "cinephiliac moment." This split-second recognition—like Roland Barthes's photographic *punctum*—seizes hold of the spectator, transforming into a sensory memory charged with personal significance. The first four chapters of *Cinephilia and History* trace the emergence of cinephilia as more of an "attitude" of looking than a drive towards analytic interpretation. Keathley introduces the cinephile as a kind of intellectual "dandy" preoccupied with "attribution and taste" (16), authorship and style. This quasi-elitism is perhaps best demonstrated by the *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics. The magazine attained legendary status via the impressionistic reviews and taste-defining manifestoes of French New Wave figures Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, and others. These directors championed classical Hollywood favorites in whose "apparently conventional" *mise-en-scène* they saw codes of unmistakable, "distinctive stylishness" (96). Marked by a sensitivity for the surface quirks or "personality" of a text, such critics exercised cinephilia's defining mode of vision, what Keathley describes as "panoramic perception" (30). Drawing from the idea that the rapidly moving filmstrip echoes the fleeting window frames of early railroad travel, the cinematic spectator scans the screen for images that cannot be readily contained in a film's formal or narrative system. Elaborating on this point, Keathley devotes a chapter to André Bazin's religiously inflected belief in the revelatory power of the cinema as a (traditionally) indexical medium. He borrows this reference to Bazin from Paul Willemen, whose essay, "Through a Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered" provides a theoretical blueprint for the book, and from which Keathley cites at times redundantly. The essential revelatory logic of cinephilia, Willemen succinctly explains, dictates that "what is seen is in excess of what is being shown" (30).

Keathley's final two chapters apply the philosophies of Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer to propose an alternative methodology for film historiography. The "new historicist anecdote" serves as the "the precise verbal-discursive equivalent of the cinephiliac moment" (140). Like the largely subjective "cinephiliac moment," the "new historicist anecdote" resists a mainstream narrative. The writer intuitively privileges a scene or detail in a film in order to share personal reminiscences, formal analyses, and philosophical reflections that can illuminate a film's historical production and consumption. It is in these last speculative chapters, rallying for a shift in film pedagogy, that Keathley makes his most pointed intervention, countering with a phenomenological approach what he dismisses as either psycho-semiotic "grand theory" or the prevailing identity politics of reception studies. It is also here, however, that the limitations of his study become most evident: if we accept cinephilia as a new ontology of spectatorship, much of the political edge and theoretical sophistication that informs the urgent concerns of "cultural studies as usual" (137) are rendered moot. As Keathley acknowledges, most film academics have always been devout cinephiles, incisively critiquing the very texts they love. Thus, his insistence on the need to recover or reclaim their "cinephiliac souls" (134) lost in the process of turning from fans to scholars feels overstated and unnecessarily proselytizing. More importantly, Keathley's vague distaste for the tasks of Cultural Studies seems at cross-purposes with his vision of the cinephile as an alternative historian, capable of diversifying and expanding our understanding of films and our collective investment in them.

Closing the volume with five cinephiliac anecdotes, these brief essays resemble well-written entries in a fanzine or literary journal. Each sample recontextualizes some element of a chosen film—whether it be an exchange of dialogue, a single close-up, or a musical refrain—inserting it into a network of surprising textual, theoretical, and historical resonances. The entire volume is itself an engaging tribute to cinephilia, and Keathley has, despite a few glaring biases, produced a work of convincing focus and impressive research that any film student, teacher, or lover would find a pleasure to read. © 2008 Jennifer Pranolo

JENNIFER PRANOLO studies film and literature at Yale University.

BOOK DATA Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006. $50.00 cloth; $19.95 paper. 212 pages.

THOMAS E. WARTENBERG

Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life by Stanley Cavell

I was very excited by the publication of *Cities of Words*. For many years, I have read Cavell's writings about film and owe them—and him—a big debt. I doubt that I would have become a philosopher of film without his example. In his books, especially *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Harvard University Press, 1984) and *Contesting Tears: The Hollwood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), I found a model for the connecting of philosophy and film that I aspired to. Although I do not agree with all of Cavell's assertions about the relationship between film and philosophy, his work has provided both film scholars and philosophers with an invaluable example of how rewarding the philosophical study of film can be.

The present book stems from a lecture course Cavell gave for many years at Harvard and then expanded at the University of Chicago. He proposes to "follow out an inkling of curiosity about the interaction of moral philosophy, one of the world's oldest subjects of philosophical investigation, with film, the latest of the great worldwide arts" (10). Because of its origin in a course that met twice a week, *Cities of Words* generally pairs a chapter on a film with one on a philosopher whose work Cavell sees as relevant to that film. Thus, we find Cavell discussing Ralph Waldo Emerson and *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), John Rawls and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), and so on. The exceptions to this pattern occur when Cavell pairs a film with a text by a thinker not generally considered to be a philosopher: Ibsen, Freud, Henry James, G. B. Shaw, and Shakespeare.

Cavell's practice reflects his conviction that the sort of thinking that interests him does not only reside in the texts canonically considered philosophy. Indeed, a central aim of this book is to show that films are precisely such "texts," for they are a prime example of works not in the traditional canon of philosophy that Cavell takes to address the fundamental issue about our lives as human beings that forms the intellectual center of this book: moral perfectionism.

Cavell's use of this notion marks the main theoretical difference between this book and the two earlier ones. It reflects a major shift in his thinking occasioned by his encounter with Ralph Waldo Emerson, the New England Transcendentalist whose writings are more likely to be taught in English departments than in philosophy ones. Emerson has become a pivotal figure in Cavell's thinking, for Cavell now sees him as the key figure in the emergence of moral perfectionism as a central philosophical concern.

The impact of Emerson on Cavell's thinking has resulted in a shift in how he connects film and philosophy. As far back as his first film book, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (1971), Cavell associated film and philosophy through their mutual concern with skepticism. Now, as his own thought has shifted its focus from skepticism to moral perfectionism, we find Cavell arguing that it is this common concern that links the films and philosophers in question.

What exactly is moral perfectionism? In the introduction to *City of Words*, Cavell tells us that we should not think of it so much as a set of specific features common to a variety of ethical theories but more as "an outlook or dimension of thought embodied and developed in a set of texts spanning the range of Western culture" (14). The twin beliefs that constitute moral perfectionism are the disappointment that the world does not satisfy one's desires and the conviction that there is a possibility of alleviating that dissatisfaction. Cavell dissociates this outlook from religious ones, for the moral perfectionist seeks to bring about a change in his—or our—circumstances here and now.

As usual in Cavell's work, brilliant insights and unanticipated turns of thought abound. Of particular interest are the fresh insights that Cavell brings to philosophical works that have been discussed so often that they seemed no longer capable of receiving new interpretations. For example, his reading of John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* provides an account of consent that reinvigorates what has seemed to many a well-worn idea. When it comes to the films, a good deal of what Cavell says here is a reworking of his earlier two books. The only films that he considers that he had not previously discussed in those books are *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *Pygmalion* (1938), and *A Tale of Winter* (1992).

Stanley Cavell is a major thinker whose work in regard to film and philosophy deserves serious consideration from both philosophers and film scholars. My hope was that this book would be the introduction to his thinking about this subject that many in these two fields had hoped for. And although I think that *Cities of Words* does this in regard to philosophy—roughly half of its chapters are devoted to exploring how moral perfectionism occurs in the writings of major philosophical figures—I do not feel that it delivers the same impact in regard to film. Perhaps this is because Cavell has already included chapters on many of the films he discuss here in his previous film books and has not had the same major rethinking of his ideas in regard to them as he has had

in relation to philosophy. Sometimes, he appears to presume an acquaintance with his earlier accounts of these films so that those chapters read too much like commentaries on his previous views instead of independent essays.

But this is a minor defect in what will certainly be a major work in the field of philosophy of film. Cavell's book deserves to be read, as he puts it, both slowly and fast, so that one can both reflect on its surprising ideas that need to be mulled over in leisure while also going back quickly to the books and films it allows us to see with fresh eyes. © 2008 Thomas E. Wartenberg

THOMAS E. WARTENBERG is the author of *Unlikely Couples: Movie Romance as Social Criticism* (Westview, 1999) and *Thinking on Screen: Film as Philosophy* (Routledge, 2007).

BOOK DATA Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004. $29.95 cloth; $18.95 paper. 480 pages.

JAMIE BERTHE

Thinking in Images: Film Theory, Feminist Philosophy and Marlene Dietrich by Catherine Constable

In this book, Catherine Constable seeks to furnish her reader with a novel way of thinking about the image of women in film, using the work of French feminist thinkers Michèle Le Doeuff and Luce Irigaray as well as the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche as her primary theoretical compasses. *Thinking in Images* begins by addressing what Constable considers the current "crisis" in film theory. Constable's use of the term "crisis" refers to the recent barrage of literature—also known as Post-Theory—which questions both the necessity and utility of film theory. She takes issue with this stance primarily through an analysis of the work of David Bordwell and Noel Carroll. Here Constable argues that theorizing is not an esoteric activity whose usefulness is restricted to the ivory towers of academia. She writes, "creating theories is a process, which both utilises and feeds back into the everyday, reconstructing or reinforcing social conceptions of gender, sexuality and culture" (2). With the help of Le Doeuff, Constable contends that it is through this feedback loop that theory is endowed with very real social and political implications. In *Thinking in Images* these implications are said to revolve around the representation of a particular image of women in Western society. While there is nothing particularly radical about this idea, the novelty of Constable's approach resides in the fact that the images she seeks to examine are not solely cinematic in nature; she also wants to analyze the image of the female as she is conceived of *within* theory, be it feminist film theory or Western philosophy. Through this mode of examination, Constable desires "to create and sustain a proper rapport between the philosophy and the film texts, rendering them all equally subject to detailed textual analysis" (3).

In their focus on "the crucial role played by images within philosophy" (29), Le Doeuff and Irigaray offer Constable the means to examine, attack, and (she hopes) transcend several of the imaginary structures that create and maintain gender bias. Constable's emphasis on the relationship between literal and metaphorical imagery is important because it provides her with the means to theorize along gender lines while working outside the psychoanalytic model, thus avoiding the trap of a binary analysis which pits female (lack) against male (plenitude). Critical of models that perpetuate this binary logic, even if only to break it down, Constable instead engages with Irigaray's "strategy of utilising neglected features of specific images" in order "to think through the possibility of new conceptual frames" (50). With this task in mind, and her theoretical foundation in place, she analyses three films from the Dietrich/Sternberg cycle—*Shanghai Express* (1932), *The Scarlet Empress* (1934), and *The Devil is a Woman* (1935)—while simultaneously examining the theoretical tropes of femininity the films make use of.

One of the things Constable is most concerned to illustrate in *Thinking in Images* is how the female characters in *The Devil is a Woman* and *Shanghai Express* can be seen to take pleasure in a sort of Nietzschean play with appearance. Her appeal to Nietzsche, which might seem peculiar at first, is justified, in part, by showing how "Nietzsche uses the figures of Helen, Maya and Baubo to link woman's role as a symbol of appearance to the concept of affirmation" (5). According to Constable, *Shanghai Express* offers its viewers a particularly compelling picture of how this play with appearance allows women to subvert the roles customarily available to them. Through close textual analysis, she examines the way the image of the female seductress is traditionally deployed in theory (particularly in Jean Baudrillard's book, *Seduction* [Palgrave Macmillan, 1991]), and then at how this role develops within *Shanghai Express*. By demonstrating how Lily makes use of her position as a seductress in order to achieve a certain amount of social autonomy, Constable argues that the film expands and destabilizes our notions of the seductress's role and is able to "affirm the development of [Shanghai Lily's] perspective and uphold her refusal to conform to the moral system" (159). Importantly, this reading focuses on Lily's status as an empowered subject, rather than understanding her as a victim or an object of male desire.

Thinking in Images is an intriguing and earnest effort to show how imagery can be used to link theory and film in novel ways. It is exciting to come across a feminist film theory

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Thinking in Images is an intriguing and earnest effort to show how imagery can be used to link theory and film in novel ways. It is exciting to come across a feminist film theory

that attempts to construct a positive representation of woman's place in film and allows for greater amounts of female agency. However, Constable charts new territory and the book, which juggles several (perhaps too many) incongruous theories simultaneously, seems at times overwhelmed by the nature of such an undertaking. Nevertheless, one hopes that *Thinking in Images* will provide film scholars and students with, if not a detailed map, the awareness of alternative theoretical pathways which, in spite of being less trodden, could lead feminist film theory away from the psychoanalytic highway, toward new horizons. © 2008 Jamie Berthe

JAMIE BERTHE is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Culture and Communication, New York University.

BOOK DATA *Thinking in Images: Film Theory, Feminist Philosophy and Marlene Dietrich* by Catherine Constable. London: British Film Institute, 2005. $75.00 cloth; $27.50 paper. 208 pages.

POLITICS

WINIFRED WOODHULL

Cinéma et engagement, ed. Graeme Hayes and Martin O'Shaughnessy

Cinéma et engagement presents a compelling case for reconsidering film as an important form of committed cultural-political intervention from the post-war years to the present. Far from casting a nostalgic backward glance at French cinema's historical participation in the revolutionary politics and social movements of yore, the volume radically rethinks the notion of committed cinema in light of today's struggles against globalization and its devastating consequences the world over. Highlighting the increasing fragmentation of the new social struggles that proliferated in the wake of May 68 (feminists, ecologists, regionalists), and underscoring as well the failure of Left political parties and unions to protect workers and the underclass in the last two decades of the twentieth century, Hayes and O'Shaughnessy show in their powerful introduction that anti-globalization movements constitute nothing less than a new structuring force in today's political landscape, one that film scholars must reckon with. Rather than seeing this new force as monolithic or unified, the editors stress the heterogeneous and conflicting character of the movements that comprise it, including those of undocumented workers and other migrants (and their supporters), those centered on cultural diversity, and those concerned to recast the notion of citizenship, as well as the procedures by which it is granted, in the current conjuncture. Still, the main point of the volume is to suggest that anti-globalization may perhaps serve as a political umbrella under which myriad groups could assemble (or "federate") in order to effect meaningful social change while also revitalizing participatory democracy.

Hayes and O'Shaughnessy show that, in tandem with the new social movements that have emerged in response to globalization, a huge number of documentary films has been released "linking [globalization] to the stakes of class [and] relating the transnational flows of capital to the transformation of local conditions, employment, services, and the standard of living" (12). This surge in committed filmmaking marks a sea change from the 1990s, when people in the film industry were primarily concerned to promote their own commercial interests within a narrow institutional frame. Sometimes relying on informal networks for the circulation and exhibition of their films outside the commercial mainstream, the new documentary filmmakers occupy a unique position: "It is this position between the antihegemonic politics of the past and the politics of the future that explains the urgent, localized, and precisely targeted character of the various forms of commitment today" (14).

The volume's first part examines committed cinema of the past, for example in an essay by a well-known critic of colonial film, Jean-Pierre Jeancolas. Part two shows how films from the 1960s to the present deal with the defeats of the Left and the working class over the past century, while part three considers recent changes in the contexts of film production and reception. These changes include the erosion of state-controlled television in favor of a proliferation of satellite and cable television channels. As Jonathan Buchsbaum demonstrates, these narrowcasting technologies have had some paradoxical effects; for instance, they have enabled the production of more minority films while also severely limiting their audiences. Yet in Buchsbaum's essay and elsewhere in the volume—notably in Hayes's essay on resistance to multiplexes—the reflection on the multiplication and splintering of audiences does not look back longingly to a time when the "counterpublic" seemed more stable and unified. On the contrary, the contributors are keenly aware that that unity came at the price of disavowing social differences and oppressing numerous groups in favor of white men. As the editors note, committed cinema has always had "to identify, to reach, and to mobilize an audience" (19); today its challenge is to attract audiences "that are not a mere fleeting hodgepodge of consumers" (18). The volume's fourth and last part focuses on commitment that goes beyond the film industry in engagements with undocumented workers, French fac-

that attempts to construct a positive representation of woman's place in film and allows for greater amounts of female agency. However, Constable charts new territory and the book, which juggles several (perhaps too many) incongruous theories simultaneously, seems at times overwhelmed by the nature of such an undertaking. Nevertheless, one hopes that *Thinking in Images* will provide film scholars and students with, if not a detailed map, the awareness of alternative theoretical pathways which, in spite of being less trodden, could lead feminist film theory away from the psychoanalytic highway, toward new horizons. © 2008 Jamie Berthe

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tory workers, sex workers, and poor women, as well as *beurs* and other minorities of the *banlieue*. All of the essays in this section emphasize the return to the collective and the political in recent films by well-known and lesser-known directors such as Bertrand Tavernier and Yamina Benguigui.

If anything about the volume disappointed me, it was the degree to which the essays reflected not only the splintering of social movements in our day but the tendency to consider only one axis of identity at a time—undocumented status, ethnicity, or gender—in relation to that of social class. And regrettably, no attention is given to dissident sexualities. More analysis of the entwinement, imbrication, and shifting significance of all these axes of identity might have better promoted the book's aim of assessing the potentiality of building a broad-based political movement. Nonetheless, *Cinéma et engagement* is an invaluable resource for scholars of French film as well as for instructors in university-level programs in French and Francophone Studies. It clearly lays out the constraints and the possibilities of today's political terrain and mediascape in France while also providing a substantial bibliography and a list of films discussed in the essays, many of which may be unfamiliar to North American readers.

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WINIFRED WOODHULL is Associate Professor of French and Cultural Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

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ERIC SMOODIN

From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney Created the Counterculture by Douglas Brode

It has become conventional wisdom to consider Walt Disney, both the man and his company's products, unproblematically conservative. But film and media scholars know that this is not really the case. Disney, the anti-union friendly witness and reliable republican, had run-ins with J. Edgar Hoover and other conservatives; hoped to take a trip to the Soviet Union; and supported a sort of pan-American liberalism during World War Two. And, of course, it is never so simple as saying that a movie, or TV show, or theme park, is simply reactionary. We also fully know that cultural products are, to say the least, ideologically complicated.

Now, however, Douglas Brode has taken just the opposite approach in *From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney Created the Counterculture*. Brode asserts that his "aim is to show that Disney's output . . . played a major role in transforming mid-1950s white-bread toddlers into the rebellious teenage youth of the late sixties" (x). The problem with this approach, though, is that it flattens Disney out just as much as do those who dismiss him as a right-wing ideologue. And it also produces a history of absolutes. For Brode, youth culture began in the 1950s, became increasingly disaffected, and turned against the government during the war in Vietnam. It is only a small exaggeration to say that Brode dates the beginning of all this to Elvis Presley's appearences on national television in 1955, an *annus mirabilis* which unnamed "observers of the pop-culture scene cite . . . as the beginning of the end to 'old' thinking on issues more significant than pop music" (2).

Nothing was more important to the teenagers who saw Elvis, though, than movies, and while most of those were "conventional," Disney films "offered us alternative possibilities" (xxxvii). He goes on to cite the "youthful rebel" of *Pollyanna* (1960), and such constant Disney moments as dance sequences, which Brode calls "offensive to Christian extremists" (5), as well as the "hippie-ish heroine" (25) in *Mary Poppins* (1964).

Brode cites numerous scholars and intellectuals, from Joseph Campbell to Theodor Adorno to Robert Warshow to I. A. Richards to Carl Jung. But there is almost no acknowledgment of the last twenty years of Disney scholarship. Instead, we have assertions about the films and television shows that Brode apparently finds definitive. Even more of a problem, though, is the notion of an undifferentiated "youth culture," with adolescents and teenagers in the 1950s and 60s understanding Disney's films and television shows all in the same way, and then reproducing the ideology of those films and TV shows in their daily lives, lives that, in this mythic version of the Woodstock era, are dedicated to the subversion of middle-class values.

We are left, then, with one writer's account of his experiences with Disney films, even though that writer hopes to make those experiences universal. Brode may certainly have points about many of the films. They do, indeed, offer up to a range of readings, including some of Brode's. But there is no reason to assume much beyond that, at least given the author's limited understanding of the time period and of the practices of audience study. © 2008 Eric Smoodin

ERIC SMOODIN is Professor of American Studies and Director of Film Studies at the University of California, Davis, and author of *Regarding Frank Capra: Audience, Celebrity, and American Film Studies, 1930–1960* (Duke University Press, 2004).

BOOK DATA Douglas Brode, *From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney Created the Counterculture*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004. $55.00 cloth; $22.95 paper. 286 pages.

tory workers, sex workers, and poor women, as well as *beurs* and other minorities of the *banlieue*. All of the essays in this section emphasize the return to the collective and the political in recent films by well-known and lesser-known directors such as Bertrand Tavernier and Yamina Benguigui.

If anything about the volume disappointed me, it was the degree to which the essays reflected not only the splintering of social movements in our day but the tendency to consider only one axis of identity at a time—undocumented status, ethnicity, or gender—in relation to that of social class. And regrettably, no attention is given to dissident sexualities. More analysis of the entwinement, imbrication, and shifting significance of all these axes of identity might have better promoted the book's aim of assessing the potentiality of building a broad-based political movement. Nonetheless, *Cinéma et engagement* is an invaluable resource for scholars of French film as well as for instructors in university-level programs in French and Francophone Studies. It clearly lays out the constraints and the possibilities of today's political terrain and mediascape in France while also providing a substantial bibliography and a list of films discussed in the essays, many of which may be unfamiliar to North American readers.

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WINIFRED WOODHULL is Associate Professor of French and Cultural Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

BOOK DATA Graeme Hayes and Martin O'Shaughnessy (eds), *Cinéma et engagement*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005. €29.50 paper. 354 pages.

ERIC SMOODIN

From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney Created the Counterculture by Douglas Brode

It has become conventional wisdom to consider Walt Disney, both the man and his company's products, unproblematically conservative. But film and media scholars know that this is not really the case. Disney, the anti-union friendly witness and reliable republican, had run-ins with J. Edgar Hoover and other conservatives; hoped to take a trip to the Soviet Union; and supported a sort of pan-American liberalism during World War Two. And, of course, it is never so simple as saying that a movie, or TV show, or theme park, is simply reactionary. We also fully know that cultural products are, to say the least, ideologically complicated.

Now, however, Douglas Brode has taken just the opposite approach in *From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney Created the Counterculture*. Brode asserts that his "aim is to show that Disney's output . . . played a major role in transforming mid-1950s white-bread toddlers into the rebellious teenage youth of the late sixties" (x). The problem with this approach, though, is that it flattens Disney out just as much as do those who dismiss him as a right-wing ideologue. And it also produces a history of absolutes. For Brode, youth culture began in the 1950s, became increasingly disaffected, and turned against the government during the war in Vietnam. It is only a small exaggeration to say that Brode dates the beginning of all this to Elvis Presley's appearences on national television in 1955, an *annus mirabilis* which unnamed "observers of the pop-culture scene cite . . . as the beginning of the end to 'old' thinking on issues more significant than pop music" (2).

Nothing was more important to the teenagers who saw Elvis, though, than movies, and while most of those were "conventional," Disney films "offered us alternative possibilities" (xxxvii). He goes on to cite the "youthful rebel" of *Pollyanna* (1960), and such constant Disney moments as dance sequences, which Brode calls "offensive to Christian extremists" (5), as well as the "hippie-ish heroine" (25) in *Mary Poppins* (1964).

Brode cites numerous scholars and intellectuals, from Joseph Campbell to Theodor Adorno to Robert Warshow to I. A. Richards to Carl Jung. But there is almost no acknowledgment of the last twenty years of Disney scholarship. Instead, we have assertions about the films and television shows that Brode apparently finds definitive. Even more of a problem, though, is the notion of an undifferentiated "youth culture," with adolescents and teenagers in the 1950s and 60s understanding Disney's films and television shows all in the same way, and then reproducing the ideology of those films and TV shows in their daily lives, lives that, in this mythic version of the Woodstock era, are dedicated to the subversion of middle-class values.

We are left, then, with one writer's account of his experiences with Disney films, even though that writer hopes to make those experiences universal. Brode may certainly have points about many of the films. They do, indeed, offer up to a range of readings, including some of Brode's. But there is no reason to assume much beyond that, at least given the author's limited understanding of the time period and of the practices of audience study. © 2008 Eric Smoodin

ERIC SMOODIN is Professor of American Studies and Director of Film Studies at the University of California, Davis, and author of *Regarding Frank Capra: Audience, Celebrity, and American Film Studies, 1930–1960* (Duke University Press, 2004).

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MICHAEL CRAMER

Hollywood: Politics and Society by Mark Wheeler

Divided into seven chapters, this book (which is written by a specialist in law, government, and international relations rather than film) commences with a two-chapter history of film as an item of trade from its inception to the present. Wheeler focuses on international export, beginning with an account of the collaboration between Will Hays and the Department of Commerce in an effort to secure a dominant place for American product in foreign markets, and concluding with an examination of recent conflicts between the United States and the EU during the 1994 GATT multilateral trade negotiations. This chronologically organized approach establishes a pattern that continues throughout the book, as Wheeler first considers the history of a particular issue and then discusses its present state. In subsequent chapters, he addresses the effects of censorship, labor guilds and disputes, and the political activity of the Hollywood elite upon the American film industry. Each chapter provides a concise introduction to its subject, painting in broad strokes the brief histories of politics, trade, and labor in Hollywood, and revealing their interactions and interdependence. Wheeler is effective throughout in establishing context and elaborating the connections between the various forces at play, presenting a large amount of information in a manageable, well-organized form. He makes a particular effort to connect past and present, stressing the effects the Paramount decrees, the Blacklist, and labor conflicts on today's Hollywood. However, Wheeler is not consistent in his treatment of historical periods. He devotes disproportionate attention to the studio system of the 1930s through early 50s, while only briefly addressing the 70s and the rise of the New Hollywood.

The book's strongest chapters are those that favor detailed examinations of relatively short periods over broad generalizations about long-term changes. Wheeler's treatment of the early history of trade unions and guilds, for example, is particularly valuable (and topical), recounting the struggles between the Screen Writers Guild and the Studios during the 1930s and the Conference of Studio Union strikes of the 40s. Here an attention to detail and a contextualization of these conflicts within the wider history of labor effectively demonstrate their instrumental role in shaping the film industry. Wheeler's analyses of left-wing activism during the 30s and 40s and the precarious balance of power between liberals and Communists in organizations like the Motion Picture Democratic Committee are likewise effective in illustrating Hollywood's connection to the global political struggles that surrounded it.

While Wheeler's chapter-length overviews will be useful to readers unfamiliar with the material, they suffer from brevity and lack of nuance. His account of post-Paramount decrees Hollywood is oversimplified, while his examination of celebrity activism and actors-turned-politicians only scratches the surface of an important phenomenon. On the whole, Wheeler offers little new research or insight, drawing upon more detailed studies (such as those by Douglas Gomery, Janet Wasko, and Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, to name a few) and relying almost exclusively upon secondary sources. Futhermore, he provides very scant commentary or argument; at its worst his text becomes little more than a litany of facts. These weaknesses, however, are somewhat offset by the book's wide breadth and its effective synthesis of a wide range of sources.

Hollywood: Politics and Society is a potentially valuable resource, as it provides short and informative introductions to numerous important topics. Even as an introductory text, though, Wheeler's book is not ideal. Despite its effective presentation of a large amount of information, it often gives the impression of having been hastily and carelessly executed. He frequently makes allusions to important incidents that are inadequately explained, as in the passing but incomplete mention (96) of the open-shop labor rulings that made Los Angeles an ideal site for the burgeoning industry. There are numerous basic factual errors (François Mitterrand was President not Prime Minister of France [45], the "Million Man March" [150] refers to the 1995 march on Washington, not the 1963 march led by Martin Luther King, Jr., and Maria Shriver could hardly be the daughter of Sargent Shriver and Eugene Kennedy [158]), suggesting either a lack of mastery of the material on Wheeler's part or very poor copyediting (or both). *Hollywood: Politics and Society* lacks fresh insight and its clumsy execution limits its appeal to any reader who has some familiarity with the area. In particular, academics are likely to be disappointed. Despite his background outside of Film Studies, Wheeler brings little if anything new to the table. © 2008 Michael Cramer

MICHAEL CRAMER is a doctoral student in the program in Comparative Literature and Film Studies at Yale University.

BOOK DATA Mark Wheeler, *Hollywood: Politics and Society*. London: British Film Institute, 2006. $80.00 cloth; $27.95 paper. 188 pages.

MONSTERS AND CRITICS

The focus on American cinema that has typified much scholarship on horror has given way recently to a global perspective. Jay McRoy's anthology of essays presents a taxonomy of the formal, thematic, and ideological elements of Japanese horror. Among the recurring tropes in these films are the avenging female spirit, characterized by her long black hair and piercing gaze (notably Sadako in Hideo Nakata's *Ringu* series); anxiety about technology; elaborate torture scenes; and sensational apocalyptic images. A number of essays in the collection illustrate Christopher Sharrett's prefatory claim that the genre emerges from "hysteria, propelled chiefly by Japan's mastery with a vengeance of industrial and post-industrial capitalism" (xii). In addition to close analyses of individual films, some of the essays take on broader topics. Richard Hand compares traditional Japanese theater and contemporary horror cinema, while Matt Hills explores U.S. fan culture around Japanese horror. The volume concludes with a comprehensive filmography of the genre, which conveniently details the U.S. and U.K. availability of films on DVD.

Mikel Koven's artfully titled *La Dolce Morte* explores the formal and thematic elements of the Italian *giallo* film, of which Dario Argento's and Mario Bava's extravagantly gory flicks are representative examples. Koven treats the *giallo* as a formulaic instance of "vernacular cinema," which asks us to "respond immediately to the images and not distance ourselves from the film through abstraction" (40). Its most memorable conventions include the presence of a dandified detective, references to folklore and urban legends, scenes of explosive violence, and the use of such hyperbolic film techniques as extreme close-ups and zoom shots. The *giallo* killer is as stylish as the film that features him (or, in many cases, her), donning a uniform of "black leather gloves, black overcoat, wide-brimmed black hat, and often a black stocking over the face" (4). Despite the chic, the *giallo* typically expresses anxiety about modernity and social change.

Horror International discusses films from nations that have been under-represented or altogether overlooked by horror criticism: Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, and Holland, among others. Since much of the collection centers on previously unexamined films, its essays sometimes sacrifice rigorous analysis to plot summary. Nevertheless, they invariably draw our attention to work that has been mostly neglected by Film Studies. Among the best is Adam Knee's essay on the resurgence of Thailand's folkloric and historical past in the nation's recent horror films. Viola Shafik's piece adopts a somewhat different perspective on the globalization of the genre by asking why Egypt appears to lack its own horror cinema: she proposes that this is due to the national film industry's attempts to resist images of Egyptian backwardness by showcasing modernity over superstition, as well as to its concern with "social reality" (287) rather than the psychological traumas to which mainstream American horror compulsively returns.

Critics also continue to discuss the ideologically charged aspects of the American horror film. Politics is an inevitable topic in discussions of George Romero's zombie films, as Kim Paffenroth demonstrates in *Gospel of the Living Dead*. The author confesses that he is "optimistic about the future of zombie movies, perhaps more optimistic than I am about any other aspect of our government, society, culture, or religion" (133). We might take this claim with a grain of salt, given the humor that pervades the project; in his author photograph, for instance, Paffenroth poses with a zombie-like gash to the throat. At the same time, he clearly takes the zombie genre seriously, discussing its films as powerful conveyers of social awareness and reform. Some of the book's claims seem familiar; zombies have been highly seductive to filmmakers and critics alike, and they can (rather appropriately) encourage mimetic versions and interpretations. While Paffenroth sometimes participates in these replications, he does present a number of innovative readings, as in his theological comparison of Romero's zombie cycle to Dante's *Inferno*.

Reynold Humphries—who has written extensively about horror cinema—examines the single decade of 1931 to 1941 in his study of Hollywood horror. This is the period in which a number of monsters were unleashed onto the American public, including Dracula, Frankenstein's creature and his Bride, the Mummy, and the Wolf Man. Like Rhona Berenstein's *Attack of the Leading Ladies* (Columbia University Press, 1996), with which it engages substantially, Humphries's book centers on the reception of these classical films. He is particularly interested in contemporary critical responses, which he argues mirror the anxieties and repressions revealed (or veiled) by the films: "My concern is to show . . . that the subject matter contained within these films influences uncon-

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sciously the way critics wrote and are still writing about the films in question" (xiii). He devotes special attention to mad doctors and scientists, the Jekylls, Frankensteins, and Moreaus whose dangerous knowledge, strangeness, and isolation made them recognizable symbols of repression in cinematic narratives. Particularly engaging is the book's chapter on sexuality and science, "Mad Doctors in Love," which draws from psychoanalytic theories to scrutinize contemporary anxieties.

Since Carol Clover's pioneering work, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws* (Princeton University Press, 1992), gender has held a central place in the corpus of horror criticism. Another forerunner in this field, Barbara Creed, has recently published a companion piece to *The Monstrous-Feminine* (Routledge, 1993). *Phallic Panic* shifts the earlier book's focus from female to male monstrosity, evidenced in such figures as David Cronenberg's Seth Brundle and Wes Craven's Freddy Krueger, who embody a "primal uncanny" that is inextricably linked to female bodies and identities. Creed examines popular films alongside literary texts (such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* [1818] and E. T. A. Hoffmann's "The Sandman" [1816]) and psychoanalytic theory (focusing especially on Freud's 1919 essay on "The Uncanny") to pursue the thesis that "by aligning the male monster with the primal uncanny, the horror film creates man as Sphinx, creating a narrative space in which man is able to question the symbolic order, to ask himself: 'What does man want?'" (202). Reversing Freud's famous question, "What does woman want?" Creed argues that the horror film offers a particularly fertile source for observing crises in masculinity. While her discussion is perhaps not as innovative as the one she initiated with her earlier, groundbreaking book, it stages successful conversations between a variety of important cinematic, literary, and critical texts.

Although *The Violent Woman* and *Killing Women* do not discuss the horror genre exclusively, their concern with gender and violence makes them highly relevant to the topic. Indeed, their breadth of focus and attention to both fictional and non-fictional narratives model an interesting direction for work in the field. The central premise of Hilary Neroni's book is that the mainstream association of violence and masculinity causes images of violent women to be inherently disruptive. At times, she takes this idea too far, as when she posits that it was "Bonnie's violence that pushed the violence [of *Bonnie and Clyde*] from disturbing to traumatic" (115). Points such as this one are balanced by a number of incisive discussions, including her chronology of the violent woman in American cinema. Her chapter on the media coverage of such "real-life" female killers as Lizzie Borden and Susan Smith (who drowned her two children in 1994) lays the groundwork for her treatment of female on-screen violence.

BOOK DATA

La Dolce Morte: Vernacular Cinema and the Italian Giallo *Film* by Mikel J. Koven. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006. $40.00 paper. 206 pages.
Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero's Visions of Hell on Earth by Kim Paffenroth. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006. $19.95 cloth. 195 pages.
The Hollywood Horror Film, 1931–1941: Madness in a Social Landscape by Reynold Humphries. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006. $45.00 paper. 300 pages.
Horror International, ed. Steven Jay Schneider and Tony Williams. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2005. $29.95 paper. 400 pages.
Japanese Horror Cinema, ed. Jay McRoy. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. $28.00 paper. 240 pages.
Killing Women: The Visual Culture of Gender and Violence, ed. Annette Burfoot and Susan Lord. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006. $38.95 paper. 380 pages.
Phallic Panic: Film, Horror and the Primal Uncanny by Barbara Creed. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005. $34.95 (Australia). 256 pages.
The Violent Woman: Femininity, Narrative, and Violence in Contemporary American Cinema by Hilary Neroni. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005. $73.50 cloth; $22.95 paper. 204 pages.

Similarly, Annette Burfoot and Susan Lord's anthology intermingles the real with the cinematic by including articles ranging from Zoey Élouard Michele's discussion of the unsolved murders of over three hundred young women in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to Steven Jay Schneider's essay on cinematic representations of female serial killers, as well as Jyotika Virdi's piece on the Hindi rape revenge film. The collection thoughtfully addresses the implications of discussing violence both on and off screen; as the editors explain, the "contributions intentionally weave between fact and fiction in order to illuminate engendered violence as a form of cultural materialization and, thus, to recognize the powerful role culture plays in the production and reproduction of social meaning" (xiii). The dual focus of the essays in this collection mirrors the double vision that critics often apply to horror cinema, as they translate its fantastic monsters into their real-world counterparts.

AVIVA BRIEFEL is Associate Professor of English at Bowdoin College.